

I'M A  
WIZARD,  
MOM! A  
SEER!

I LITERALLY HAVE SO  
MUCH POWER THAT I MESSED  
UP THE TEST AS A BABY!

I'VE ONLY GOT THE ONE SPELL OF MY OWN  
FROM A MARK, BUT I'M A WAND MAKER WHO'S  
A WALKING MAGIC POWER BATTERY!

AND EVEN IF I WASN'T, DAD'S A POWERFUL  
WIZARD WITH THE GOVERNMENT, AND YOU'RE A  
RENOWNED MONSTER HUNTER! I'M SUPPOSED  
TO BELIEVE YOU WERE AFRAID FOR ME?!

YOU  
WEREN'T  
AFRAID!  
YOU WERE  
ASHAMED!

SO ASHAMED OF YOUR  
WEAKLING SON THAT YOU  
DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR  
WIZARD DAUGHTER!

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

WHAT THE HELL COULD YOU HAVE BEEN SO AFRAID OF THAT YOUAAAAAH!

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

turn  
CLICK

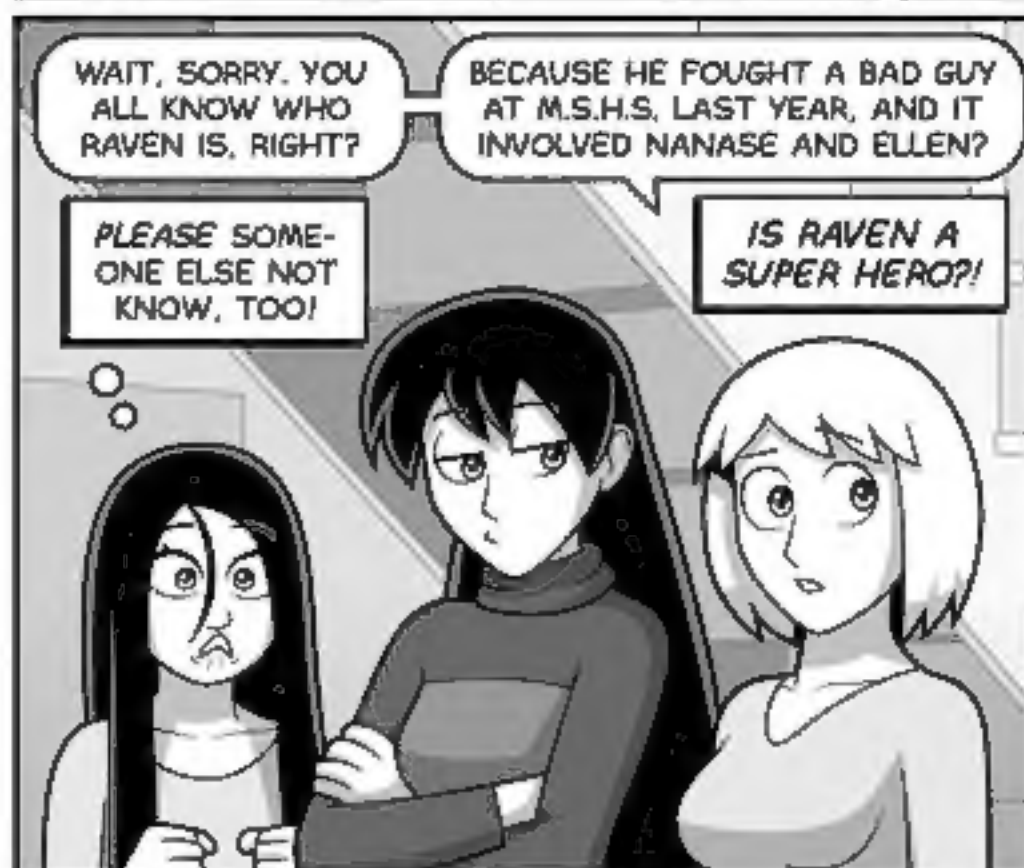
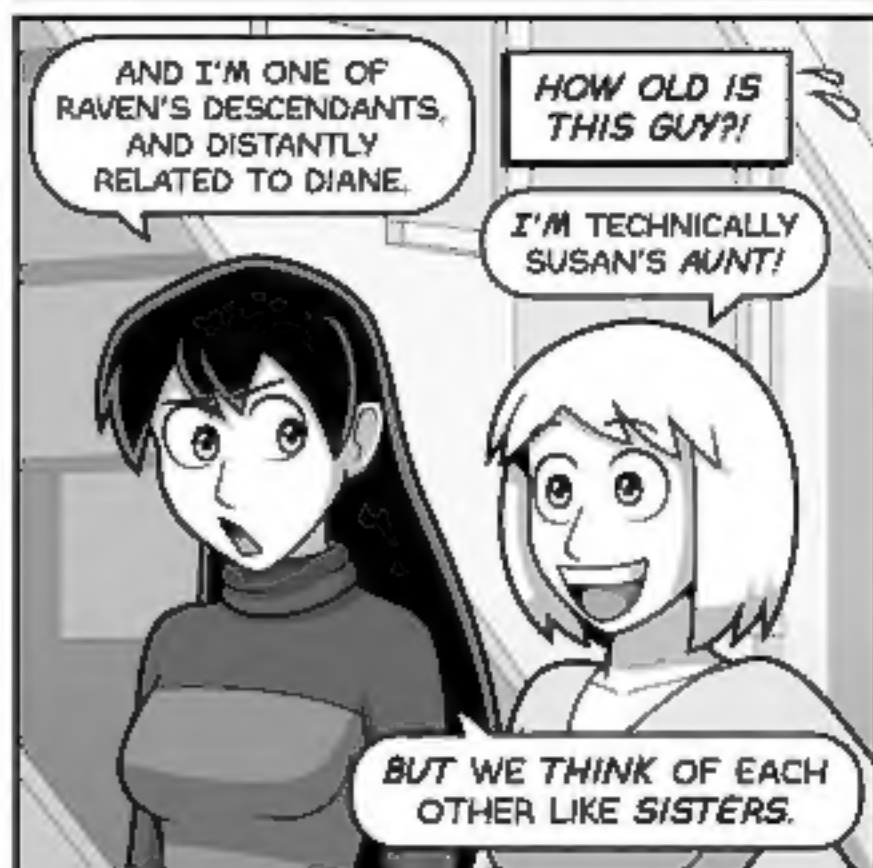
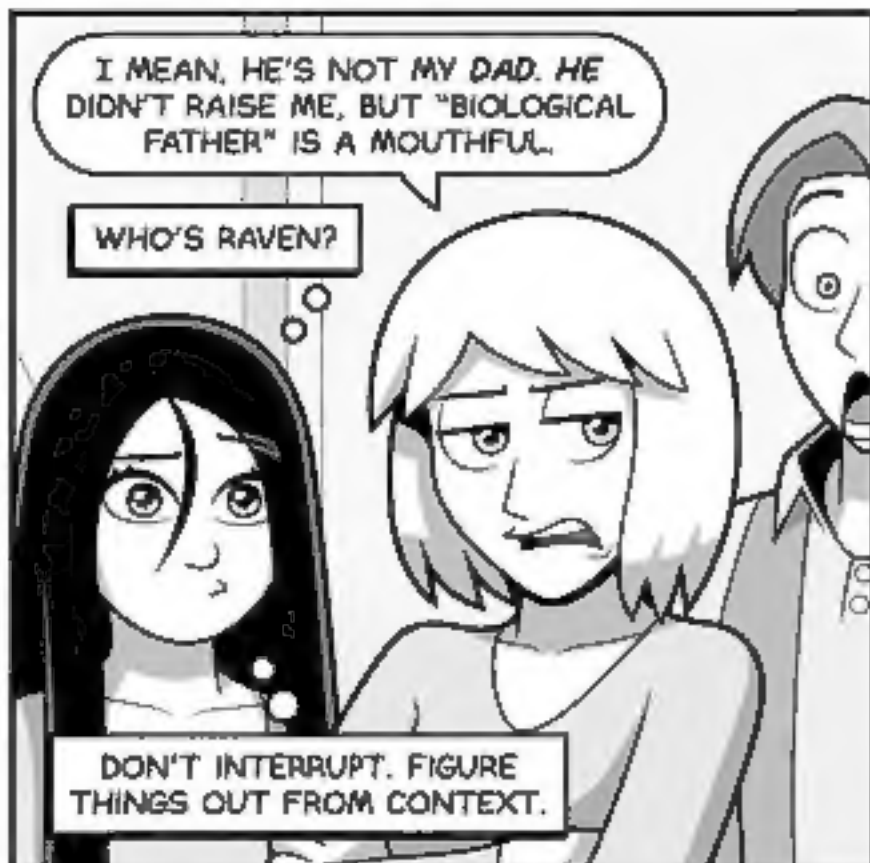
turn  
CLICK

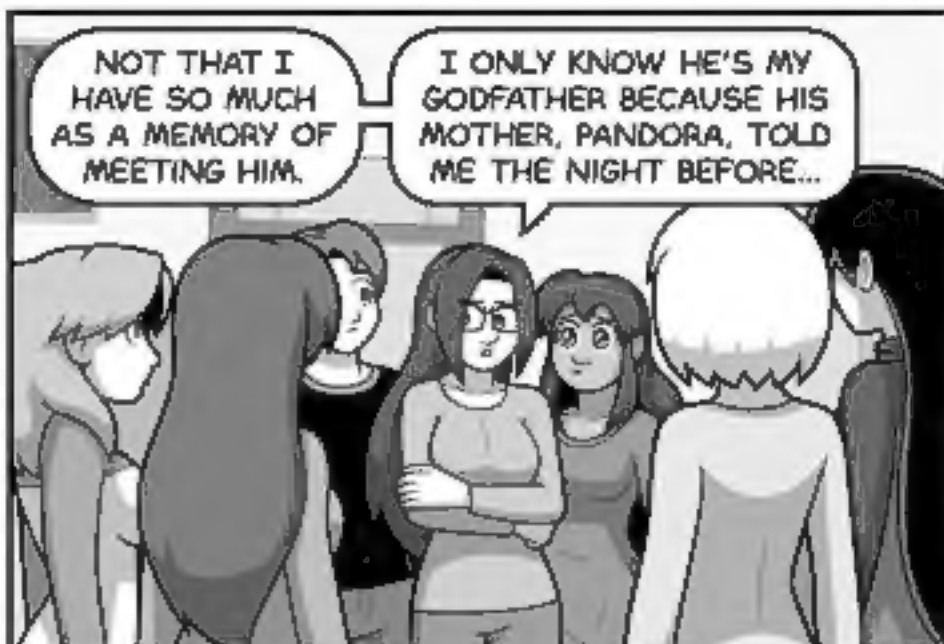














HE WAS ALSO AT THE MALL. HE WARNED US ABOUT THE MONSTERS.

HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE.



HOW WAS HE? ASIDE FROM WORRIED ABOUT MONSTERS.



HE GOES BY "ZEUS" NOW.



DIDN'T JERRY USE "ZEUS" AS AN EXAMPLE OF A BAD NAME FOR AN IMMORTAL TO CHOOSE?

YES.

OOF.



WHAT KIND OF AUTHORITY DO YOU HAVE ON PANDORA RETURNING AND BEING... UH...

MORE WHO SHE WAS?



THE WILL OF MAGIC ITSELF.



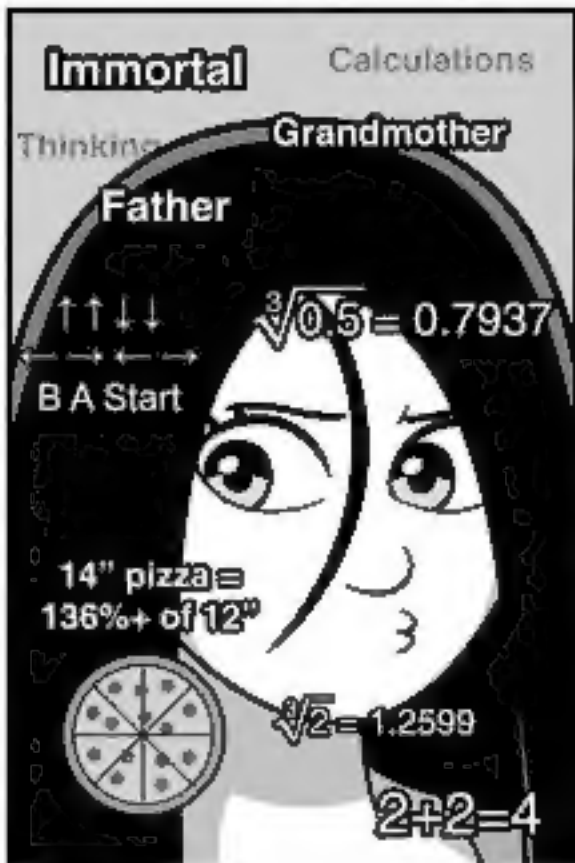
YOU'VE GOT WORD OF GOD ON THIS?!

NO CULTS!



SHE WON'T BE EXACTLY THE SAME, AND I GUESS NONE OF US KNEW HER THAT WELL...

BUT THE POINT IS, SHE'LL BE MORE "HER" THAN MOST RESET IMMORTALS.



Immortal

Calculations

Thinking

Grandmother

Father

↑↑↓↓  
←→←→  
B A Start

$\sqrt[3]{0.5} = 0.7937$

14" pizza  $\equiv$   
136%+ of 12"



$\sqrt[4]{2} = 1.2599$

$2+2=4$



WAIT, SO... YOUR FATHER IS THE SON OF AN IMMORTAL?









OH!  
RIGHT.  
SORRY.

ASHLEY, RAVEN IS A  
HALF-IMMORTAL WIZARD  
WHO TEACHES HISTORY  
AT MOPERVILLE SOUTH.



## HISTORY!

- The past!
- Written by the victors!
- Mix of Facts, Deductions, and Guesswork!

OH...



BUT RAVEN  
TOLD ME HALF-  
IMMORTALS  
CAN'T HAVE  
CHILDREN...

W-WHY WOULD  
HE TELL YOU  
THAT?



WHEN WE TRIED TO SAVE  
THE BOAR, PART OF THE PLAN  
WAS ME TALKING TO IT.

WAIT  
WHAT

I CAN ONLY DO THAT WHEN FUZZY,  
SO HE USED AN ILLUSION TO HIDE  
THAT, AND MADE ME LOOK RELATED TO  
HIM TO INVITE FEWER QUESTIONS.

I LOOKED LIKE  
SUSAN, SO I  
ASKED IF HE  
HAD ANY KIDS.



YOU IMMEDIATELY THOUGHT  
HE MIGHT BE MY DAD?

I GUESS I WASN'T FAR OFF?  
BUT HE SAID HALF-IMMORTALS  
CAN'T HAVE KIDS, SO...



HE DIDN'T THINK  
THEY COULD. NEITHER  
DID PANDORA. SHE  
FELT TERRIBLE ABOUT  
MISINFORMING HIM.

I KNEW HE  
FOUND OUT  
HE HAD A  
DAUGHTER,  
BUT...



...I HAD NO IDEA  
HE WAS TALKING  
ABOUT DIANE.



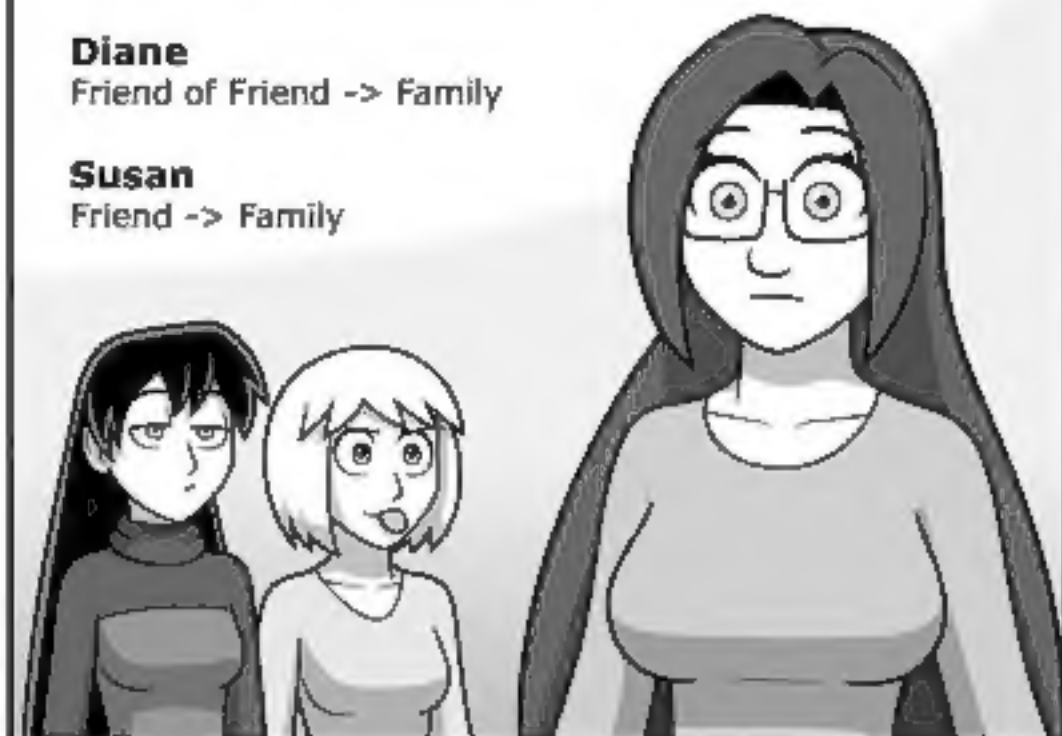
## Updating Perception of Relationships

**Diane**

Friend of Friend -> Family

**Susan**

Friend -> Family



YOU KNOW HIM?  
YOU DON'T EVEN  
GO TO SOUTH!



I'M KINDA-SORTA FRIENDS  
WITH YOUR GRANDMOTHER? SHE  
WANTED MY MAGIC TO HELP  
WITH A THING AND SHE VOWED  
TO HELP ME AWAKEN. AND



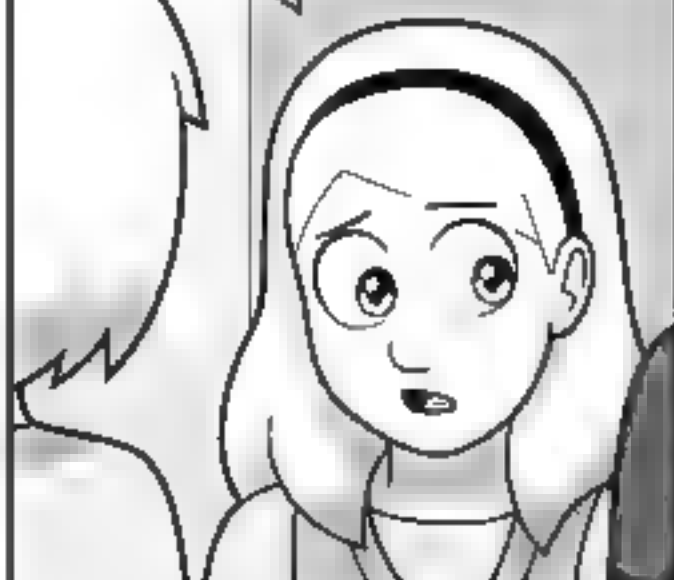
YOUR MAGIC?

RIDICULOUSLY COMPLICATED TO  
EXPLAIN. ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE  
UNFAMILIAR WITH HELPFUL POP  
CULTURE REFERENCES TO  
COMPARE IT TO.



WITHDRAWN  
FOR NOW

ANYWAY PANDORA TALKED TO  
ME ABOUT HER SON. WHO I LATER  
LEARNED WAS RAVEN. SHE WAS  
UPSET ABOUT MISLEADING HIM, BUT  
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ABOUT.



I WANTED HIM TO KNOW  
HOW MUCH SHE CARED ABOUT  
HIM, AND SHE'D BE BACK WITH  
REAL MEMORIES OF HIM, SO  
I CALLED HIM UP



WHEN HE TOLD ME PANDORA  
GOT A CHANCE TO TALK TO HIM  
ABOUT IT, HE ALSO TOLD ME  
HE HAD A DAUGHTER.



WHAT'D  
HE...

SAY  
ABOUT  
ME?



THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW  
HOW HE WAS GOING TO  
MAKE IT UP TO YOU.



...OR IF HE SHOULD EVEN  
BE PART OF YOUR LIFE.







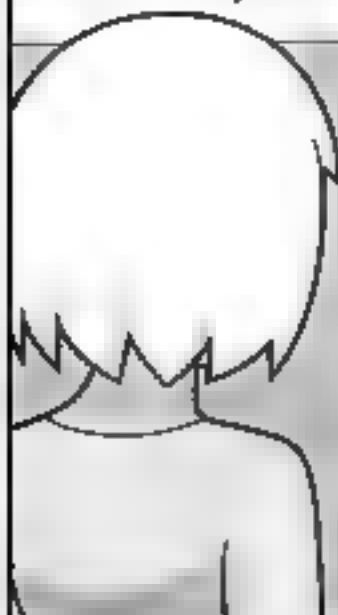
I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT EVENTUALLY. THERE'S NO PERFECT ANSWER TO THIS.



CHANCES ARE I'LL WIND UP TALKING TO RAVEN WHEN I RUN INTO HIM IN A HALLWAY OR SOMETHING ANYWAY, SO.

SUSAN, YOU GOT ANYTHING YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?

NAH.



REALLY? YOU'VE

BEEN PRETTY DISTANT



MONSTERS ATTACKED. I HAD TO KILL ANOTHER VAMPIRE. I SAW PANDORA VANISH.

IT WAS BAD. I'M DEALING WITH IT



YOU FEEL BAD ABOUT KILLING THE VAMPIRE.

I SHOULDN'T THEY WERE GOING AFTER A K.D.

IT'S NATURAL TO FEEL BAD. YOU'RE NOT A KILLER.



I OBJECTIVELY AM.



SO PRETTY MESS'D UP ABOUT MY MOM, RIGHT?

WHOOSH

I BET SHE FOUGHT A FIRE BEAR.











SO, UM... I KNOW EVERYONE MIGHT HAVE HAD ENOUGH MAGIC FOR ONE NIGHT, BUT I HAVE A SUGGESTION FOR WHAT WE MIGHT DO NEXT?

AFTER COVERING UP THE MIRROR, OF COURSE.



WE MIGHT WANT TO BE DONE WITH MAGIC FOR NOW

IF EVERYONE WANTS TO BE, I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND, BUT...

WE HAVE A MAGIC WAND THAT CAN SHRINK PEOPLE TO HALF HEIGHT, MAKING EVERYTHING SEEM EIGHT TIMES AS BIG FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE



WE ALSO HAVE TINY FORKS AND GLASSES...



...AND CAKE.



GASP

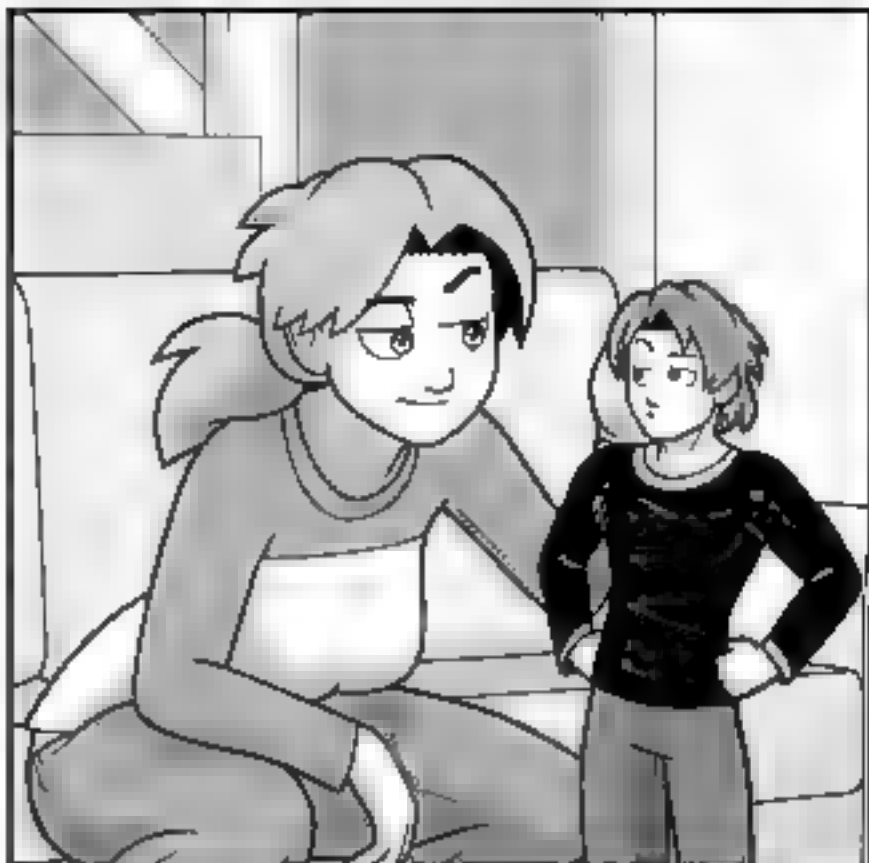
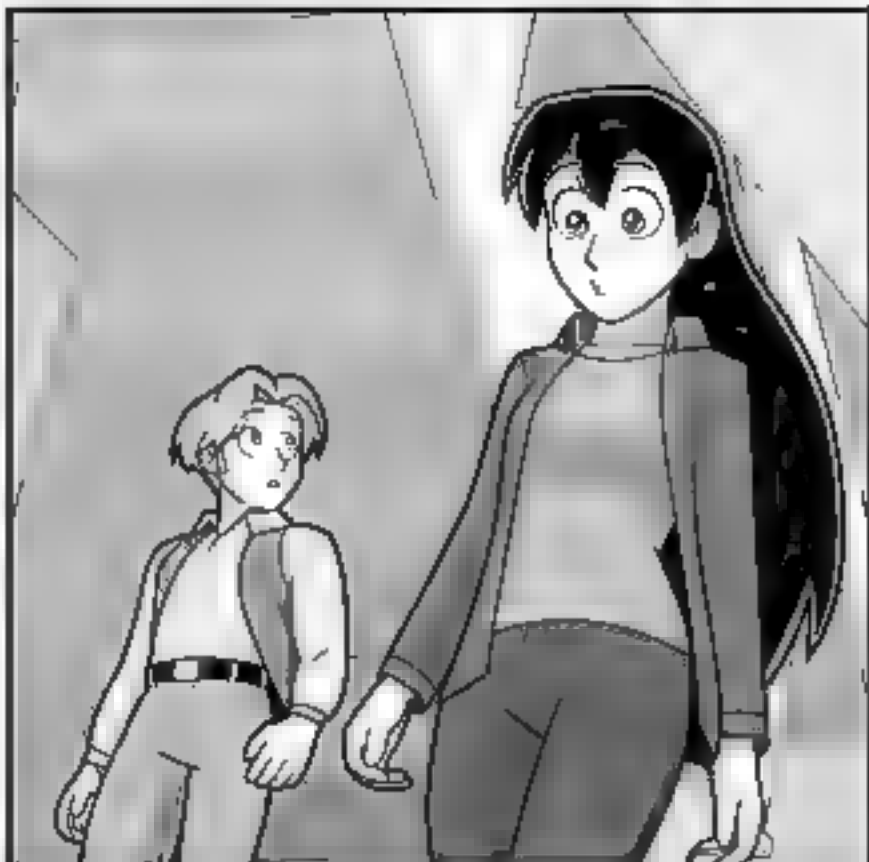


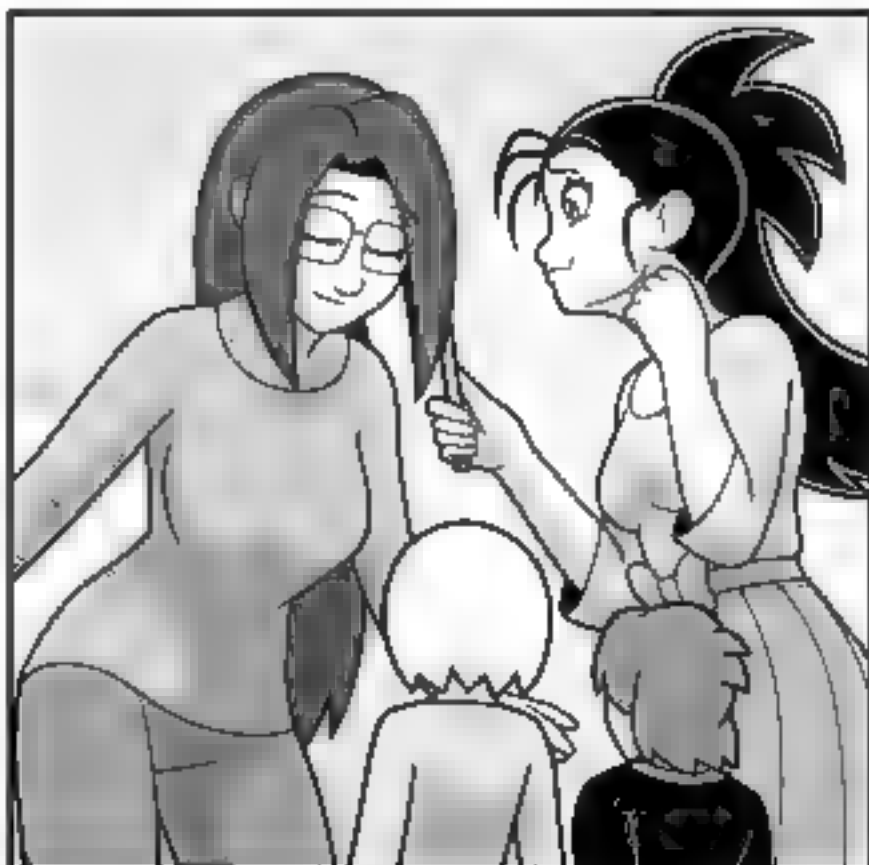
GIANT CAKE?



WHICH DO I WANT MORE. RELATIVELY GIANT CAKE, OR TO BE RELATIVELY GIANT.











At half-height or smaller, less than three feet tall with dinner trays too high, and cups too small, our heroes couldn't comfortably consume cake

Knowing that some of them (Susan) would be aghast if they simply put their plates on the floor and dug in, they decided to eat at normal size

This was suggested by Nanase, who, not one hundred percent certain what happens when one of her fairy dolls eats, was suspiciously quick to suggest it

This did not stop Justin from immediately bringing up the subject of what happens when Nanase's dolls eat, and proposing quantum transference of consumed cake from fairy doll Nanase to actual Nanase

Ashley made herself enormous before reverting everyone, briefly experiencing everyone else looking extra minuscule



With normally sized cakes consumed, and a desire to continue fun with magic, additional arcane antics ensued



Spells combined



Shown off.

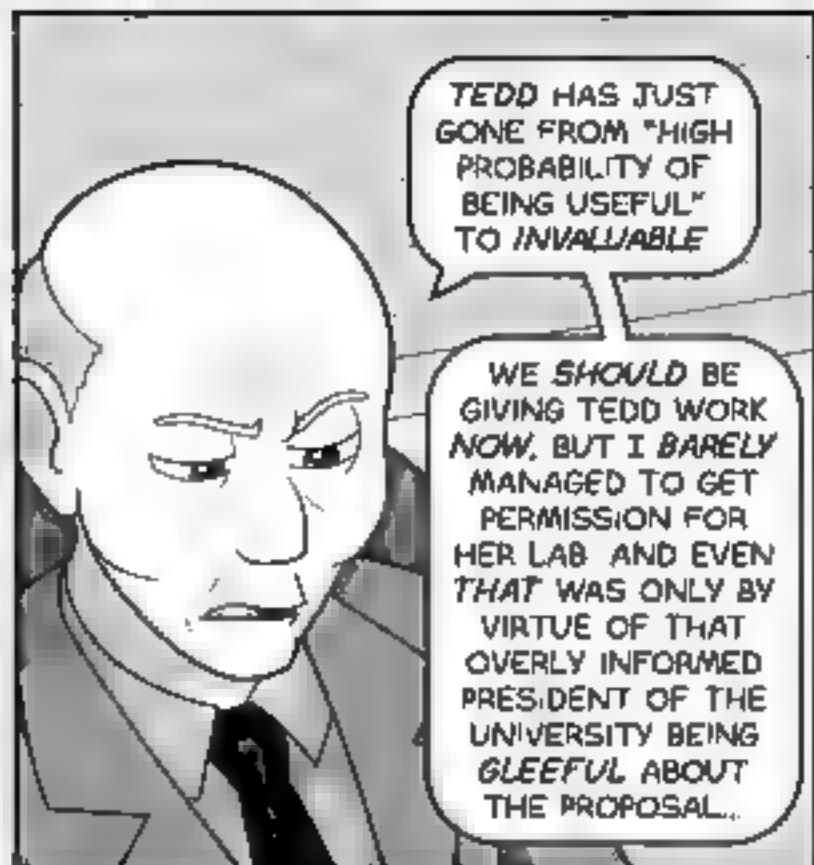
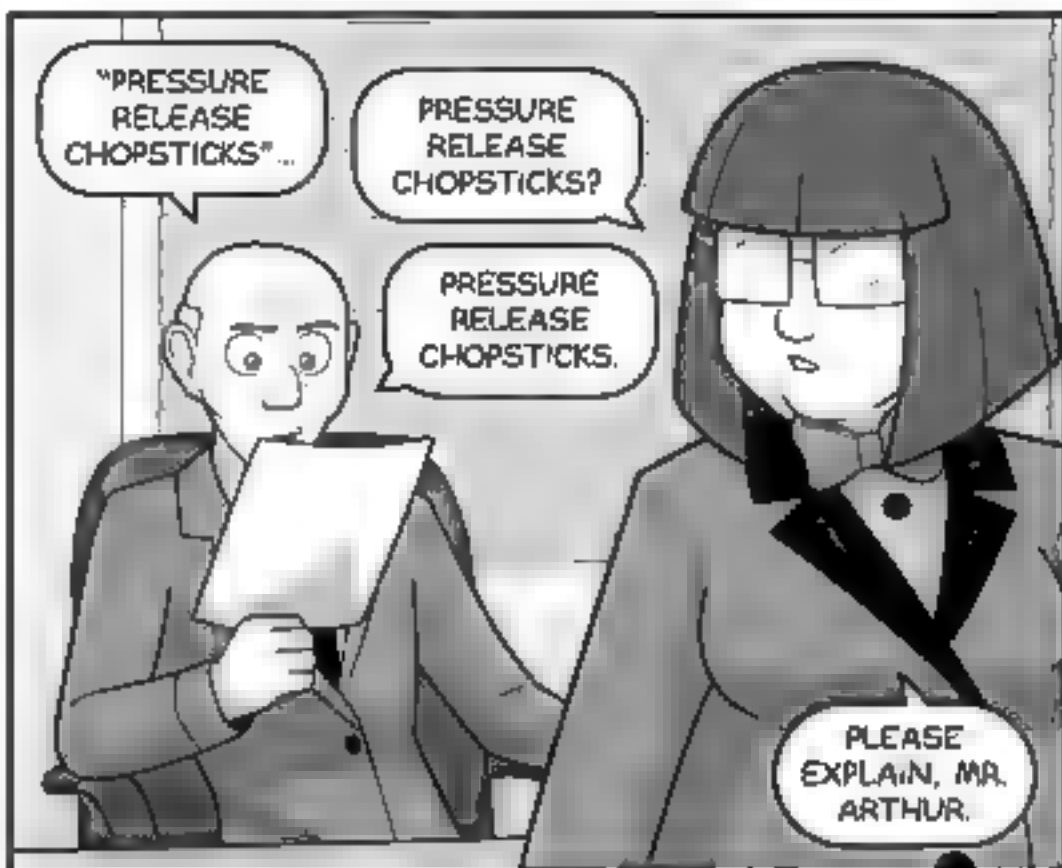


And at least one  
a most forgotten spell  
that, hey, Elliot can do  
pain-free now



Sunday, The next day...



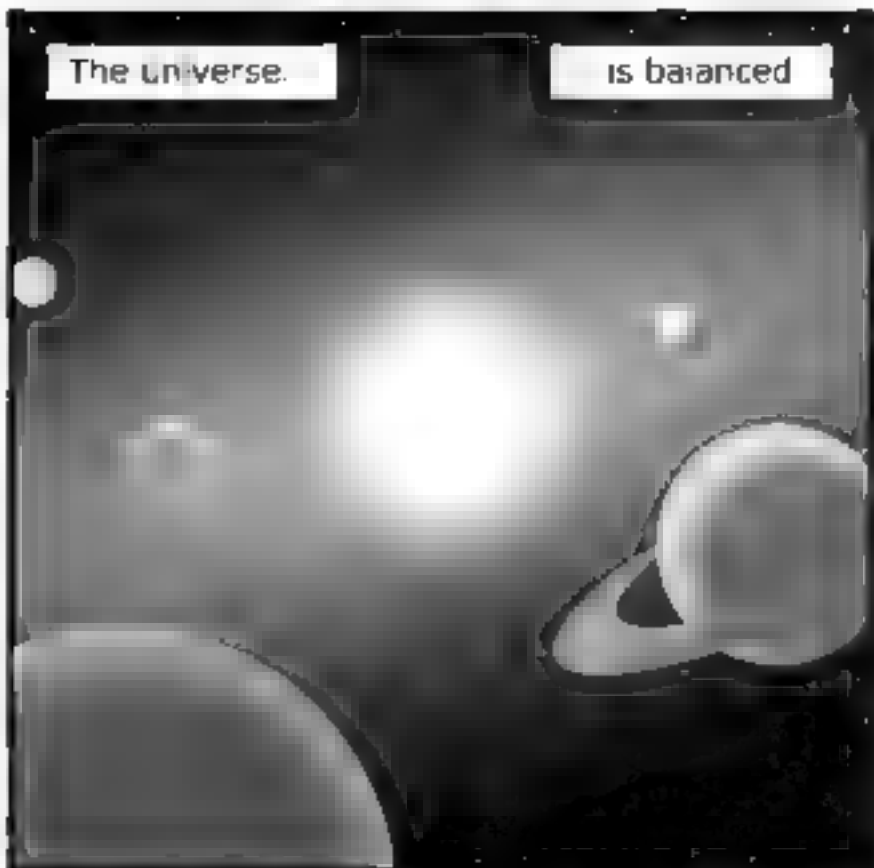


# Reflections **THE END**

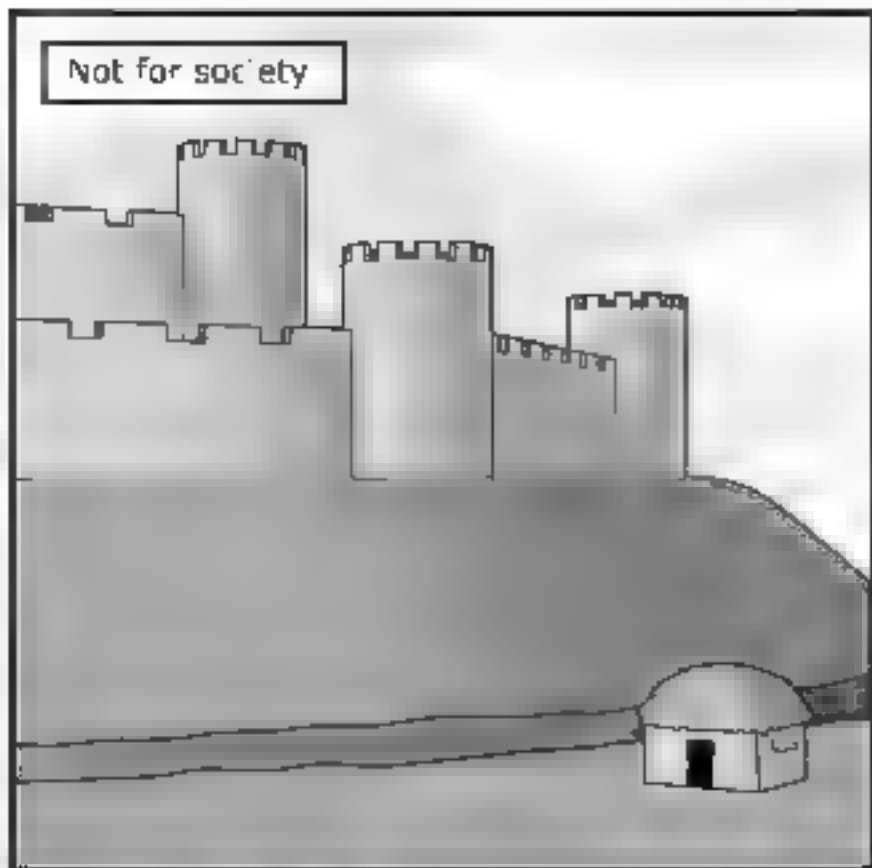
**Story comics will return Weds, March 31**  
(EGSNP comics still Tues-Thurs-Saturday)

The universe.

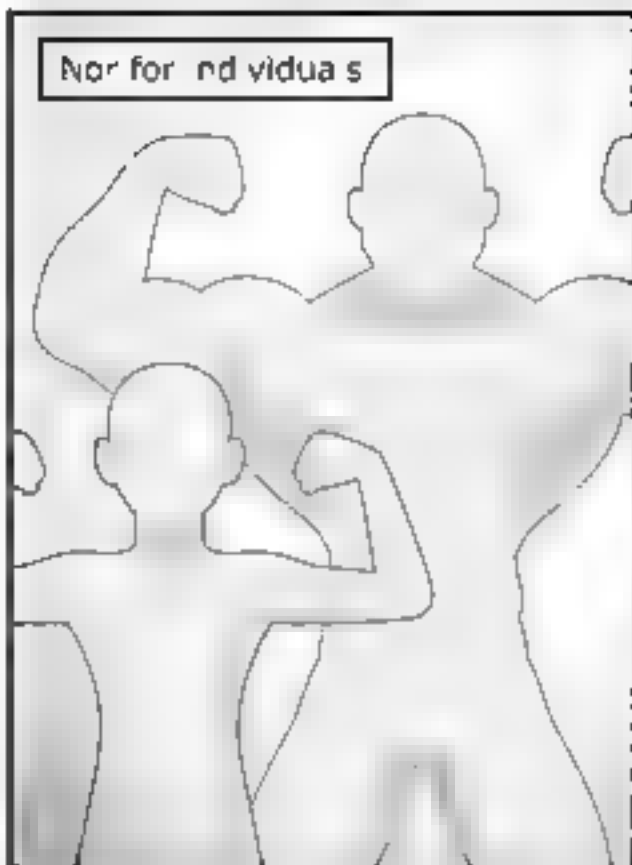
is balanced



Not for society



Nor for individuals



Nor the average diet.

MMM... POISON.

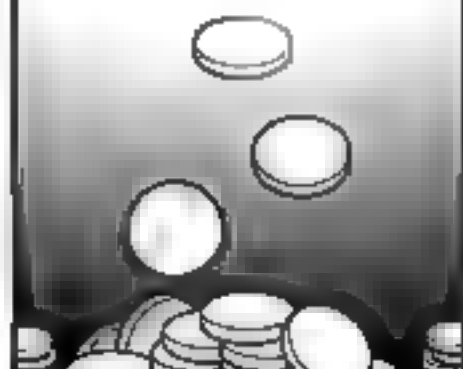


Energy Matter Magic

For one thing to increase, another must decrease

Nothing destroyed, only changed.

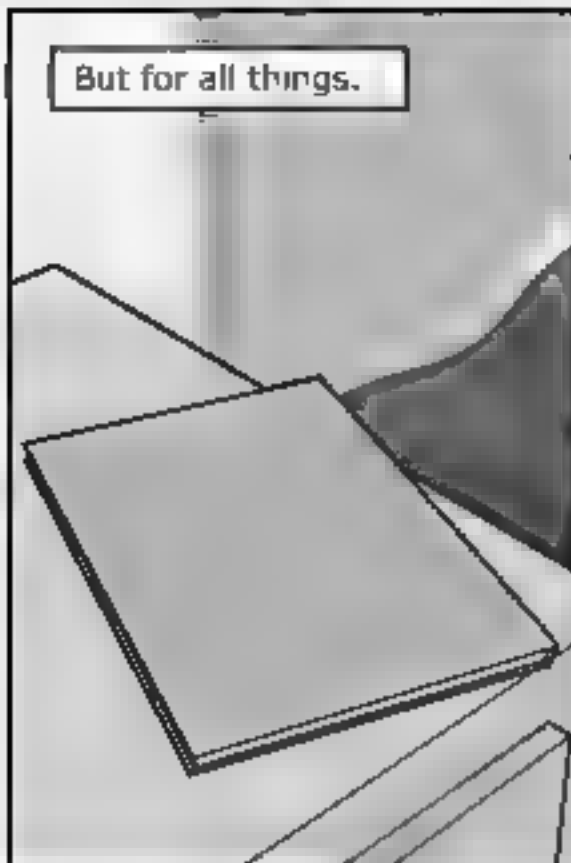
For all things, a cost.



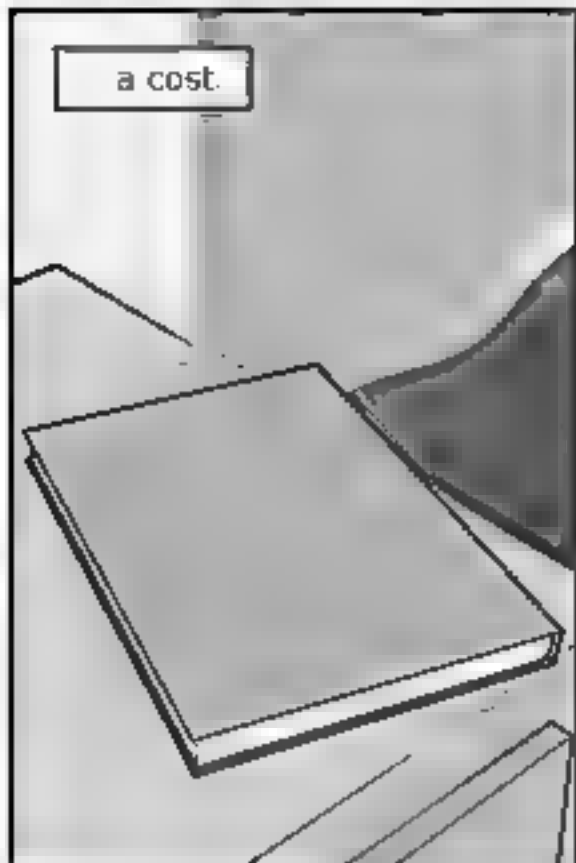
The shift of magic use from restricted to open, from certain inequity to potential future equity, was celebrated by some of the few who knew of it happening



But for all things.



a cost.





## Balance. Part 1

Four weeks after Eliot's first date with Ashley, and one week after throwing a party for Ashley, Eliot Dunkel, Edward Verres, and one other wait in a forest for a meeting with Tara and Andrea, griffins from another Earth.

On the same Earth, were one to ask Andrea. It's a rather complicated and confusing.

One week ago, Eliot would have simply been a bit nervous about not having more to tell the griffins.

After the sudden complications of the past week, however, there is much more for everyone to be nervous about.



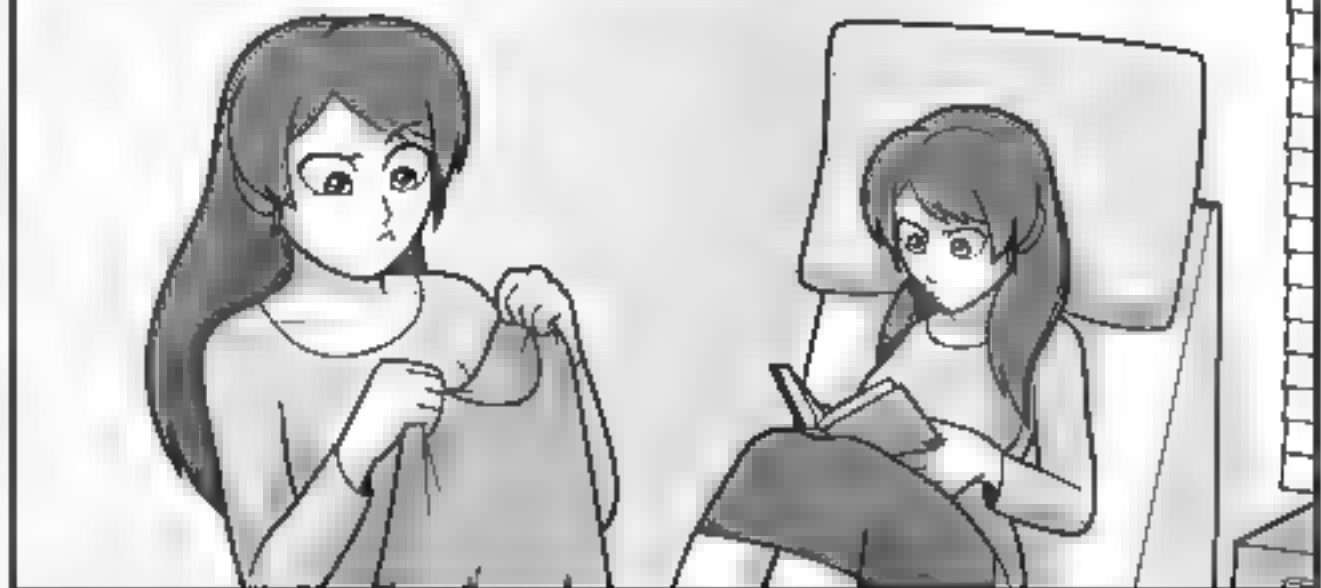
TAKEN AT ITS MOST TECHNICAL, HOW MAGIC WORKS HAS NOT CHANGED AT ALL.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IS HOW MUCH MAGIC IS BEING KEPT IN CHECK.

WITH MAGIC IN LIMITED USE AND HIDDEN, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ENHANCE THE VARIOUS MAGIC RESISTANCES OF HUMANS...

Few things are as confusing as the inner machinations of magic, for they are alien in thought, and often in open defiance of known physics

Five nights before Elliot's meeting with the griffins Tara and Andrea, however, a book of average reading comprehension seemed to be proving itself a contender in confusion for Nanase Katsune



AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHO THIS GUY IS?

IT KEEPS SAYING HE'S DOING. UH... STUFF BUT...



FOX, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

THAT'S NOT HOW YOU FOLD STUFF YOU, UH...

I'LL DO IT MYSELF  
DISMISSED.

**POOF**

ANNND I SHOULD HAVE ENDED THE DUPLICATE SPELL AFTER HAVING HER SET DOWN THE SHIRT



THE PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR! THAT'S WHO THAT WAS! HE WAS LISTENING IN ON THEM TALKING, AND



...AND WHY I AM I THINKING TEN BILLION TIMES MORE CLEARLY WITH FOX GONE?





The shock was immediate and widespread.

Or it would have been, if anyone checked their spell books on a daily basis.

As it was, the complete lack of calm at the center of the storm was Nanase, and the storm would cyclone outward from her

WHAT THE F—

I DUNNO IF WHAT ANY OF MY SPELLS DO HAVE CHANGED. BUT MY BOOK'S DEFINITELY WORDIER. SAME WITH ELLIOT'S.

MY CHEERLEADER SPELL READS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A ROLE-PLAYING GAME!

THE ADDITIONAL TEXT SEEMS TO BE DEVOTED TO LIMITATIONS AND SIDE EFFECTS I DID NOT PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCE.

DOES YOUR BOOK ALSO INCLUDE WAYS AROUND THOSE SIDE EFFECTS BY USING MORE POWER OR ACCEPTING DIFFERENT SIDE EFFECTS?

AND I CAN STILL SUMMON FOX BUT IT'S HARDER TO THINK, AND WE'RE BOTH WEAKER. AND THERE'S A BUNCH OF WAYS I CAN TWEAK IT BUT

TEDD I THOUGHT MAGIC WASN'T CHANGING?!

TEDD?

YOU THERE?

WHAT THE F—



YOU'RE UNDER  
ARREST! HANDS  
BEHIND YOUR HEAD!

ON WHAT  
CHARGES?!  
AND...

IS THAT  
A WAND?!

A MAGIC WAND, YES, AND YOU ARE  
UNDER ARREST FOR FLEEING FROM AN  
OFFICER OF THE LAW, TRESPASSING  
ON PRIVATE PROPERTY VANDALISM.

VANDALISM?!

YOU TURNED SOME-  
ONE'S CHICKENS INTO  
LITTLE DINOSAURS.

WE CAN FIGURE  
OUT EXACTLY  
WHAT THAT IS  
LATER.

NOW GET  
THOSE HANDS  
BEHIND YOUR  
HEAD.

YEAH  
BECAUSE  
THAT  
SOUNDS  
LEGIT

IT WAS  
JUST A  
PRANK, BRO!  
I AIN'T  
BROKEN  
FEDERAL  
LAW!

ARE YOU EVEN FBI?  
WHAT'RE YOU DOING  
OUT HERE?! YOU  
AIN'T A STATE COP!

I ASSURE YOU, I AM FBI! I'LL  
SHOW YOU MY BADGE JUST AS  
SOON AS I'M LESS CONCERNED  
ABOUT HAVING TO QUICKLY  
BLOCK A SURPRISE SPELL.

NOW PLEASE PUT YOUR  
HANDS BEHIND YOUR HEAD  
OR BE ARRESTED BY FORCE

MAN, I AIN'T  
GOING ANYWHERE  
WITH YOU!

WE'LL  
SEE  
ABOUT  
THAT



...GIVEN KNIGHT'S INJURES, THE SPELL NOT ONLY BACK-FIRED, BUT WAS MUCH STRONGER AND DANGEROUS THAN NORMAL

HIS PARTNER HAD STAYED BEHIND TO DISENCHANT THE CHICKENS BEFORE THEY COULD BE SEEN, BUT MANAGED TO FIND HIM SHORTLY AFTER

WHILE HE SHOULD MAKE A FULL RECOVERY, HE..

HE MIGHT NOT HAVE SURVIVED IF HIS PARTNER HADN'T BEEN THERE

KNIGHT HAS SAID THAT GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE'S THANKFUL HE TOOK THE HIT INSTEAD OF THE PERPETRATOR.

AND THAT HE IS SORRY

THEY SHOULD HAVE STAYED TOGETHER

ONE COULD HAVE BEEN ON GUARD WHILE THE OTHER PROVIDED IDENTIFICATION.

THIS IS NOT HOW WE SHOULD HAVE LEARNED THE PRICE OF MY HUBRIS.

HAS EVERYONE BEEN WARNED NOT TO USE THEIR WANDS?

IT'S... STILL IN PROGRESS...

MR. ARTHUR, WE

WE CAN'T TRUST OUR WANDS, WE ALL NEED TO DOUBLE-CHECK AND TEST ALL OUR SPELLS...

THE PLAN YOU MADE FOR MAGIC CHANGING. CAN WE APPLY IT HERE?

MY PLAN ASSUMED A CLEAN SLATE.

I FORESAW US HAVING THE TIME AND RESOURCES TO ADAPT, AND ANY POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS FLOUNDERING IN IMPOTENT IGNORANCE

THIS IS NOT A CLEAN SLATE, SYBIL.

THIS IS THE RUBBLE AND RUIN OF AN EARTH-QUAKE

The day after Nanase's discovery, which was three days after the party for Ashley, and four days before the meeting with the griffins, was a Tuesday

Completely unaware of the chicken incident with Agent Knight, Elliot, Tedd, and Grace attempted to make sense of Elliot's newly-comp ex Cheerleadra spell

I'M NOT SURE IF I SHOULD BE RELIEVED OR ANNOYED THAT THESE SPELL DESCRIPTIONS ARE STILL OVER-SIMPLIFIED.

How different it actually was, however, was not entirely clear

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TOLD *MAGIC ITSELF* THAT THE WORDY OLD STYLE CONFUSED PEOPLE.

YES, WELL. THE NEXT TIME I'M TALKING TO AN ALIEN INTELLIGENCE OF NEAR OMNIPOTENCE, I'LL CHOOSE MY WORDS MORE CAREFULLY

RIGHT I'M GOING WITH "ANNOYED" BECAUSE THIS IS TOO LACKING IN SPECIFICS FOR ME TO BE SURE IF THIS IS A DOWNGRADE OR AN UPGRADE.

IT'S NOT CLEAR IF CHEER-LEADRA IS MORE OR LESS POWERFUL NOW

I KNOW, RIGHT?

I DON'T! WHAT'S IT SAY? HOW DO YOU THINK IT WORKS NOW? WHAT'S CONFUSING ABOUT IT? I NEED EXPOSITION!

WELL—

**EX-PO-SI-TION!**  
**EX-PO-SI-TION!**

THUMP THUMP THUMP  
GRACE.





## Charm

Enhanced social skills, and more bonuses / options with more points

Only one point = Does nothing.

## Awareness

Elevated spatial awareness and other abilities with more points.

Only one point = Does nothing.

## Tech

Gain abilities from held items, or keep access to spells if nothing was held \*

Only one point = Does nothing

## Strength

What it sounds like

Only one point = Roughly as strong as not-transformed masculine Elliot.

## Flight

More points give proper flight, faster flight, higher flight, etc

Only one point = Can float, but not fly.

## Endurance

Stamina, protection from physical harm

Only one point = Decent protection from heat and cold

## Resistance

Defense against spells and enchantments

Only one point = Does nothing

\* Elliot can choose to gain special skills from "Tech", or keep access to non-Cheerleadra spells while Cheerleadra.

So no Cheerleadra-Cat + Phone powers.







FOURTEEN?  
THAT'S  
ONLY TWO  
PER STAT

AND A ONE IN  
MOST STATS DOES  
NOTHING?

THAT SOUNDS  
LOW IS THAT  
LOW?



I'M NOT SURE. IT TURNS  
OUT IT'S HARD TO TELL  
JUST BY GOING WITH THE  
DEFAULT AND FLOATING  
AROUND THE HOUSE

STRENGTH WOULD BE EASY  
TO TEST IF I HAD MORE  
WEIGHTLIFTING STUFF (AND  
IF I'D TESTED IT BEFORE)  
BUT I MOSTLY DO  
CALISTHENICS, SO...



IT DOES SOUND LIKE YOU CAN  
GET MORE POINTS AND INCREASE  
THE SKILL CAP ABOVE THREE

I'M ONLY BASING THAT ON  
THE BOOK SAYING "CURRENTLY"  
A COUPLE TIMES, BUT



HUH. SO IF CHEERLEADRA ALWAYS  
HAD TWO IN EACH STAT OR THREE  
IN SOME STATS WITH ONE IN CHARM  
OR WHATEVER, THIS CHANGE JUST  
MEANS MORE OPTIONS.

BUT IF NOT,  
THEN THE FORM'S  
WEAKER NOW

AND SINCE IT DESCRIBES A TWO IN  
STRENGTH AS "A LITTLE STRONGER",  
I'M BETTING ON WEAKER.



BUT THERE IS A  
WAY I CAN GET MORE  
POINTS RIGHT NOW

BUT  
AT WHAT  
COST?!

I ASSUME  
THERE'S A  
TRADE-OFF



I CAN GET  
MORE POINTS  
BY MAKING  
MYSELF  
SMALLER.

MY STRENGTH GETS STUCK AT  
ONE MAYBE LESS THAN ONE?  
BECAUSE Y'KNOW, SMALLER?

BUT MAYBE NOT LESS.  
BECAUSE Y'KNOW MAGIC?

+2

ANYWAY, IF I SACRIFICE STRENGTH,  
I GET POINTS FOR EVERYTHING ELSE.

SO... IF YOU SHRINK A LITTLE BIT, YOU CAN DO EVERYTHING BUT STRENGTH BETTER?

I ASSUME IT'S A LITTLE BIT, AND NOT A FAIRY-LEADRA SITUATION.

A LITTLE BIT FOR EACH POINT I GUESS IT COULD BE A LOT IF I WANTED A LOT OF POINTS?

LIKE... TWENTY-ONE MINUS TWO THEN FOURTEEN, TIMES FIVE... UP TO TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT SMALLER? I THINK?

I HAVE A HYPOTHESIS. NOT ABOUT WHY THIS IS SUDDENLY HAPPENING NOW, BUT ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING.

SIMPLE SPELLS, LIKE YOUR BASIC FEMME-FORM SPELL, HAVE MORE NOTES, BUT DON'T SEEM TO FUNCTION ANY DIFFERENTLY

AT WORST, THEY'RE EXACTLY THE SAME

AT BEST, THEY HAVE MORE OPTIONS.

I THINK THIS ONLY MATTERS FOR CERTAIN SPELLS BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THE SPELLS THEMSELVES HAVE ACTUALLY CHANGED.

I THINK SOME THINGS HAVE GONE FROM AUTOMATIC TO MANUAL

SORT OF LIKE... OUR SPELLS HAD TRAINING WHEELS YANKED OFF?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT, YEAH.

YOU CAN DO MORE BUT IT'S HARDER, AND YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO FALL OVER.

THERE'S GREATER RISK AND DIFFICULTY BUT ALSO GREATER REWARD.

ANOTHER ANALOGY WOULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BUILDING A COMPUTER AND BUYING A PREBUILT MODEL.

IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, YOU CAN DO MUCH MORE IF YOU BUILD THE COMPUTER YOURSELF IF YOU DON'T..

I LIKE THE BIKE ANALOGY MORE. I KNOW HOW TO RIDE THOSE





WHATEVER'S GOING ON, I NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT CHEERLEADRA "BUILD" I'M GOING TO USE ON SATURDAY

MAYBE I SHOULD MAX OUT CHARM? I'M NOT SURE IT'S SET UP TO IMPRESS GRIFFINS FROM ANOTHER WORLD, BUT



OH CARP THE GRIFFINS. UM...

THEY'RE FRIENDLY, RIGHT? LOVELY MARRIED COUPLE? LEFT ON GOOD TERMS?



YEAH, BUT PLAN FOR THE BEST, BE READY FOR THE WORST, AND, WELL...

THE WORST WOULD BE ANGRY GRIFFINS WHO COULD DEFINITELY KICK CHEERLEADRA'S BUTT EVEN BEFORE NOW



OH.



ON TOP OF THAT, I'VE NO IDEA WHAT I'M GOING TO TELL THEM.

WE SORT OF KNOW WHY A MAGIC CLOG EXISTS, AND THAT IT CAN BE REMOVED, BUT NOT HOW, AND...



EDWARD!

EDWARD?

TEDD'S DAD! TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT!



ABOUT HOW TO OPTIMIZE CHEERLEADRA. OR WHAT TO TELL THE GRIFFINS?

YES.

AND REQUEST A SMALL ARMY OF MAGIC FBI GOONS FOR PROTECTION

Experimentation had to wait, for it was, after all, a Tuesday, and Tuesday makes fools of us all

Fools or not, however, by Tuesday's end, nearly every magic user was aware of some spells behaving differently



This did not include those marked by Pandora

With one exception, they would not notice any difference in their spells

She who did notice was a ready exception, for none of the others came close to her power

...and she had a book of her own to check



Most people who used magic, however, knew other people who used magic. Nearly everyone who used magic had learned how from another person

An immortal rampantly giving isolated individuals magic marks without their knowledge was, to put it mildly, an anomaly.

Though how to use magic wasn't common knowledge, there was strong word of mouth among magic users.



Many hypotheses were thought of that were similar to Tedd's.

There were also many hypotheses that were complete nonsense, because this is humanity we're talking about.



No human, however, knew for certain what was happening, or why

No human, that was, except for a man who didn't know that he knew, or that there was such a thing to know about,

A man with no memory of the bargain he'd struck, or of his hidden service to the world, except when he needed those memories

And at the very start of Wednesday, he would share that truth with another.



**WE'VE HAD IT WITH YOUR  
FABIAN TACTICS, FABIVS!**

I CAN'T HELP IT!  
I'M TOO FABIVS NOT  
TO USE THEM!

AND BESIDES,  
THEY'RE  
WORKING!

SOUND LONG  
TERM STRATEGY  
DOESN'T MAKE  
US LOOK COOL!

WE'RE  
PROMOTING  
MINVCIUS TO  
CO-DICTATOR!

EHH?!

'SUP, NERD! I'M GONNA  
WRECK HANN BAL!

OH DEAR GODS.

CAN I PLEASE  
KEEP DOING MY  
STRATEGY?

WITH ENOUGH  
BAKE SALES  
WE'LL DEFINITELY  
CONVINCE HANNIBAL  
THAT CARTHAGE  
SHOULD BE A  
FRIEND OF ROME!

YOU'RE  
DREAMING  
ABOUT  
ENDING THE  
SECOND  
PUNIC WAR  
WITH BAKE  
SALES?

OH FOR.

YOU DID NOT  
JUST INTERRUPT  
A FUN HISTORICAL  
FICTION DREAM!

SORRY?

The Emissary of Magic acts on behalf of The Will of Magic itself

He previously contacted Grace in her dreams to warn her of magic potentially changing. Grace would forget most of these dreams, so this took several attempts.

He only knows who Grace is while using a spell to contact her in her dreams, making other means of contact all but impossible.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME, BUT...



YOU'RE HERE TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON WITH MAGIC, AREN'T YOU!

EFFECTIVELY, YES. THE WILL OF MAGIC WANTS INFORMATION TO REACH THE SEERS IT MET WITH, AND THERE ARE...



...ISSUES WITH TRYING TO CONTACT SEERS THIS WAY.

AND YOU CAN'T JUST CALL THEM, EITHER?



I WON'T REMEMBER WHO THEY ARE AFTER WE'RE DONE HERE.

OF COURSE YOU WON'T



AREN'T I, LIKE A TERRIBLE CHOICE TO CONTACT, THOUGH?

I ALWAYS FORGOT WHAT YOU TOLD ME BEFORE.

IS THIS EVEN YOUR FIRST TIME CONTACTING ME ABOUT THIS?



THIS IS MY FIRST ATTEMPT, AND I EXPECT IT TO BE THE LAST.

I WAS TOLD YOU WOULD REMEMBER THIS WITH PERFECT CLARITY.

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WOULD SUDDENLY BE VERY GOOD AT REMEMBERING DREAMS, BUT I'VE NO REASON TO DOUBT IT'S TRUE.

OOH, MY DREAM JOURNAL MUST BE WORKING...



I AM HERE BECAUSE MAGIC DOESN'T PERCEIVE REALITY AS WE DO. EVERYTHING IT TELLS US IS A TRANSLATION OF SOMETHING ENTIRELY ALIEN TO US, AND WE ARE ENTIRELY ALIEN TO IT.



COMMUNICATING WITH MAGIC IS LIKE TWO BEINGS THAT CAN BARELY COMPREHEND EACH OTHER TRYING TO COMMUNICATE THROUGH SEVERAL LAYERS OF TRANSLATION IN BOTH DIRECTIONS.

SO LIKE A JELLYFISH TALKING TO AN EAGLE?



YES.

WOW SO SOMETHING GOT MISTRANSLATED?

SORT OF, YES. THE WILL OF MAGIC TOUCHED ON WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT A LOT OF DETAILS WERE LEFT OUT.

SHORTLY AFTER A RELEVANT PART OF THE MAGIC SYSTEM FINISHED ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL...

...MAGIC PICKED UP ON CONFUSION FROM THE SEERS.

AFTER GOING OVER EVERYTHING WITH ME, THE PROBLEM BECAME OBVIOUS.



TAKEN AT ITS MOST TECHNICAL, HOW MAGIC WORKS HAS NOT CHANGED AT ALL.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IS HOW MUCH MAGIC IS BEING KEPT IN CHECK.

WITH MAGIC IN LIMITED USE AND HIDDEN, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ENHANCE THE VARIOUS MAGIC RESISTANCES OF HUMANS...



...AND TO KEEP CERTAIN FORMS OF MAGIC FROM BEING POSSIBLE.

IF MAGIC ENTERS COMMON USAGE, THIS INTERFERENCE BECOMES INFEASIBLE.

THAT'S WHAT MAGIC SOUNDS LIKE?



TO ME, YES.

WHEN MAGIC IS TRANSLATED, EVERYTHING IS SIMPLIFIED.

IN THIS CASE, "ENHANCE" AND "INTERFERENCE" WERE DETAILS SIMPLIFIED TO THE POINT THAT THEIR TRUE MEANING WAS LOST.



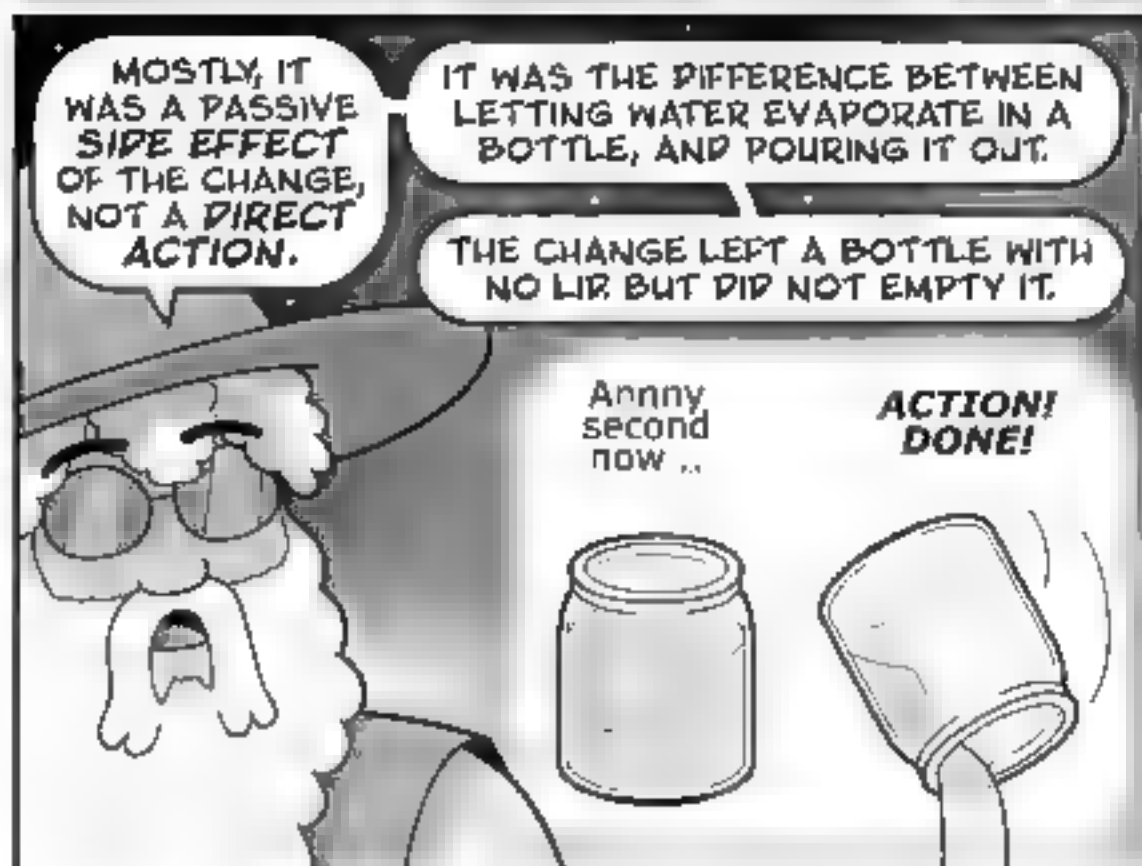
MAGIC RESISTANCE, AND PREVENTING SOME TYPES OF MAGIC, WERE EFFECTS OF THESE "ENHANCEMENTS"...

...BUT THEY DID MORE THAN THAT



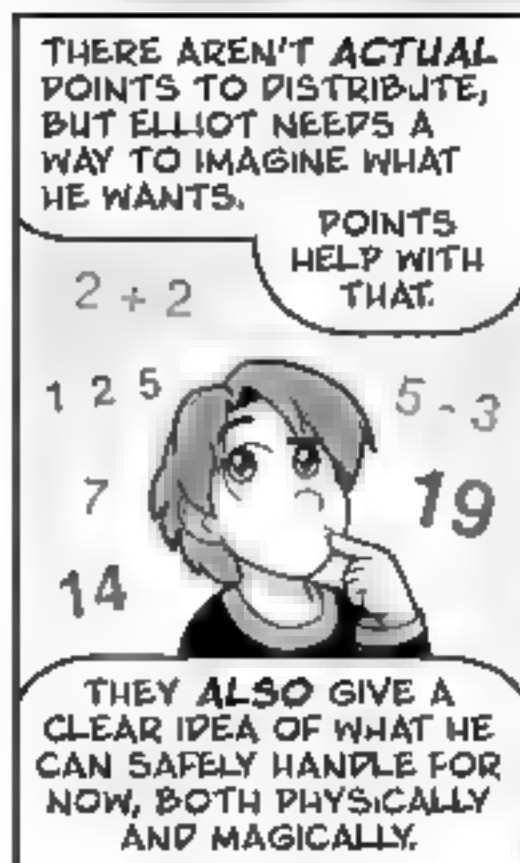
CORRECT.





**Next story comic planned for Friday!**

I am getting my second vaccination shot, and my understanding is I should expect at least a day of not feeling well, though it could be more. If the schedule changes further, I will do my best to let everyone know, and I'll tweet about how I'm doing - @elgoonishshive





YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT ELLIOT'S SPELL



I CAN KNOW ABOUT ANY SPELL SO LONG AS IT IS RELEVANT TO A TASK I'VE BEEN GIVEN.

ELLIOT'S SPELL BEING AN EXTREMELY GOOD EXAMPLE FOR WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU MET THAT REQUIREMENT.



AS FOR SHRINKING FOR MORE "POINTS", WELL...

THAT'S SOMETHING VERY FEW WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED WHILE MAGIC WAS GIVING A HELPING HAND

HOW TO EXPLAIN THIS...



LET'S SAY A SHORT FRIEND OF YOURS WANTS TO REACH A SHELF HIGHER THAN EITHER OF YOU, AND YOU HAVE SIZE MAGIC.

IS IT EASIER TO—



DOES SHE HAVE SIZE MAGIC?!

WHAT? WHO?

HER! RHODA!



I CAN'T SAY. IT'S IRRELEVANT TO MY TASK.

**ARRRGH**

I AM SO SURE YOU SAID SHE DID!



I CAN NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY. ANYWAY, YOUR SHORT FRIEND WANTS TO REACH A HIGH SHELF YOU HAVE SIZE MAGIC.

IS IT EASIER TO SIMPLY GROW THEM...

...OR TO SHRINK YOURSELF AND GROW THEM?



THE SECOND ONE SOUNDS LIKE I'M CASTING TWO SPELLS, AND SHOULD BE WAY HARDER WITH NO BENEFIT WHATSOEVER.

BUT SINCE YOU'RE ASKING, THE SECOND ONE IS EASIER.



CORRECT. MAGIC HAS A CURRENCY THAT DEFIES THE PHYSICAL LOGIC OF THE WORLD.

THE VALUE OF ATTRIBUTES.

THE VALUE OF  
ATTRIBUTES?

SO WHAT, I  
ENCHANT MYSELF IN  
SOME *OPPOSITE* WAY  
TO MAKE A SPELL  
USE *LESS* ENERGY?

OPPOSITE,  
APPROPRIATE,  
IRONIC...

HOW THINGS ARE *GENUINELY*  
*PERCEIVED* BY THE CASTER MATTER  
MORE THAN PHYSICAL SENSE.

FOR EXAMPLE, A  
SPELL THAT BOOSTS  
*STRENGTH* CAN BE  
EASIER TO CAST AT  
THE COST OF  
*REASON* IF THAT  
*GENUINELY* MAKES  
SENSE TO YOU.

THERE'S NO  
ARGUING THAT  
SOMETHING  
MAKES SENSE  
IF YOU DON'T  
*ACTUALLY*  
BELIEVE IT.

WITH ENOUGH ENERGY,  
YOU CAN JUST MAKE, UM,  
RHODA HERE BIG.

IF YOU'RE SHORT ON  
ENERGY TO MAKE HER  
*NOT-SHORT*, YOU  
CAN TRADE HOW BIG  
YOU ARE TO MAKE  
HER BIGGER AT A  
REDUCED COST.

IF MULTIPLE PEOPLE ARE  
AFFECTED, THE ENCHANTMENTS  
ARE LINKER IF ANY OF THEM  
END, THEY ALL DO.

IF SOMETHING IS *TRACKING*  
THE ENCHANTMENT, IT WILL  
FIND EVERY ASPECT OF IT.

NOT THAT ENCHANTMENT  
TRACKING IS COMMON IT'S JUST  
A THING THAT WOULD HAPPEN.

HUH. SO..  
COULD I MAKE  
ME BIGGER AND  
HER SMALLER  
AT A REDUCED  
COST?

NO. THE POINT IS GIVE  
AND TAKE. THAT WOULD  
JUST BE TAKING.

YOU HAVE  
TO GIVE  
SOMETHING.

REDUCE AN  
ATTRIBUTE.

OKAY.. BUT WHAT IF  
I HAVE A *NEGATIVE*  
ATTRIBUTE, AND--

PLEASE STOP TRYING  
TO BREAK THE  
ATTRIBUTE ECONOMY.



THE SPELL YOU'RE CASTING **ALREADY KNOWS** IF ITS EFFECTS ARE INCREASING OR DECREASING VALUES.

YOUR PERCEPTION DOESN'T AFFECT THAT. IT **ONLY** AFFECTS WHAT ATTRIBUTES ARE OPTIONS FOR TRADING.



IF A SPELL THINKS IT'S DECREASING A VALUE, YOU WON'T HAVE THE OPTION TO TRADE TO BEGIN WITH.

NOW, IF YOU'RE **QUITE DONE** TRYING TO FIND EXPLOITS—

**NEVER!**

**~SIGH~**



THESE TRADES CAN DO MORE FOR CERTAIN SPELLS THAN REDUCE ENERGY COST.



THEY CAN PROVIDE POWER AND EFFECTS THAT COULD NOT NORMALLY BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT GREAT SKILL.

ELLIOT, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS MORE ENERGY THAN HIS HERO SPELL REQUIRES, BUT IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS PUMPING EXTRA ENERGY INTO IT TO GET MORE POINTS.



WELL, IT **SORT OF IS**, BUT IF HE TRIED IT AT THIS POINT, HE'D JUST WASTE ENERGY.

MAKING HIMSELF SMALLER DOESN'T MAKE THE SPELL EASIER TO CAST, BUT IT **DOES** PROVIDE MORE POINTS THAN HE COULD NORMALLY GET WITHOUT MORE SKILL, POWER, AND EXPERIENCE.

A LOT OF SPELLS OFFER ADDITIONAL POWER AND EFFECTS IN THIS WAY, AND SOME SUCH TRADES WILL NOW BE NOTED IN SPELL BOOKS.

THOSE **NOTED** TRADES WON'T BE THE ONLY ONES THAT ARE POSSIBLE, HOWEVER.



SO... THE **SIZE** THING DOESN'T MAKE THE HERO SPELL EASIER TO CAST, BUT THERE **COULD** BE A WAY TO DO THAT? A TRADE TO GET MORE POINTS IN **EVERYTHING**, INCLUDING **STRENGTH**?



WHAT COULD HE TRADE TO DO THAT?

I'M NOT TELLING YOU.

**WHY NOT?!** WHAT IF HE NEEDS MORE OF THOSE POINTS THAT DON'T EXIST FOR SOMETHING?

LIKE FIGHTING GIANT **BIRD-CATS!**



ONE, THOSE POINTS REPRESENT WHAT HE CAN SAFELY HANDLE RIGHT NOW.

TWO, IT'S A **BAD TRADE.**



**STAY AWAY FROM IT.**





The emmissary of Magic visited me in my dreams again and explained some stuff! 😊

Magic was holding our hands, but now it's not, and there's an attribute currency I THINK I understand? I can explain after school.

Also, he said uryvoms 🤔 aren't from space? WHAT?



**GRACE!**









KNIGHT

WE PUT OUR LIVES ON THE LINE  
TO PROTECT PEOPLE FROM THREATS  
THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT



WE HAVE TO BE WILLING  
TO USE FORCE TO DEFEND  
THEM, AND OURSELVES,  
FROM THE MONSTERS  
THAT ABUSE MAGIC



OUR JOB IS TO PROTECT  
THOSE WITHOUT MAGIC.

TO KEEP  
MAGIC OUT OF  
THEIR  
LIVES.



WE MIGHT HAVE TO HURT  
PEOPLE SOMETIMES, BUT WE DO  
IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS.

You got lucky  
once

You won't get  
lucky again.

Behave.



THERE IS NOTHING FOR US  
TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT



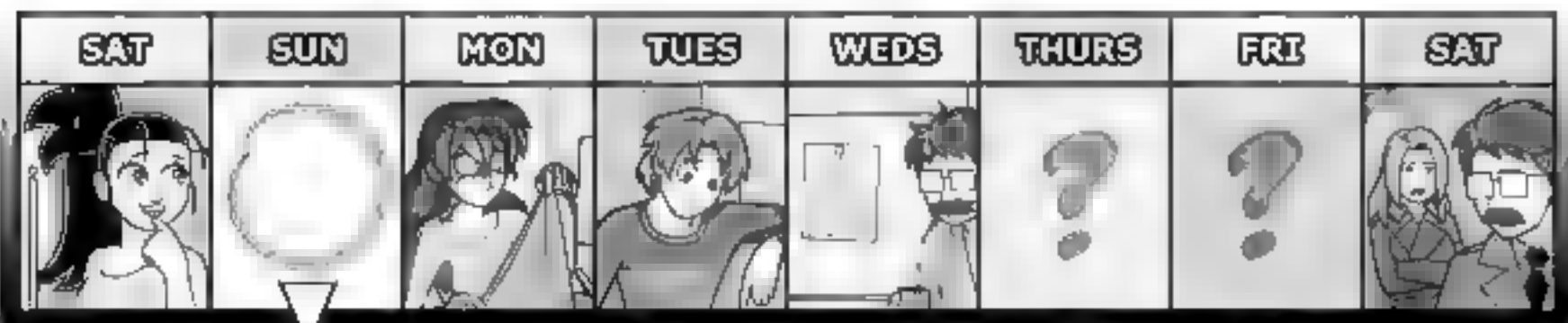
WE ARE THE  
GOOD GUYS.

Before the note on the  
fridge of Wednesday

The fools of  
Tuesday.

And the sudden  
change in magic  
of Monday

There was the plotting and  
scheming of Sunday



IT'S A SIMPLE HEIST

"HEIST"?

YOU OUR  
SQU RREL ON  
THE INSIDE,  
CONVINCE  
RHODA THAT  
SHE SHOULD  
TRY PLAYING IN  
ONE OF OUR  
FRIDAY NIGHT  
CARD TOURN-  
AMENTS.

SARAH  
MEANWHILE,  
CONVINCES  
CATALINA THAT  
CARD GAMES  
ARE SUPER  
COOL, AND  
TOTALLY AN  
ACCEPTABLE  
HOBBY FOR  
ADULTS TO  
HAVE

THEN, AT THE TOURNAMENT, THE  
ACE UP OUR SLEEVE, MY BOYFR-END  
LUKE, ANTICLIMACTICALLY LOOKS  
AT THEM WITH HIS ABILITY TO SEE  
IF PEOPLE HAVE MAGIC POWER.

GET THEM HERE,  
AND THERE IS  
ZERO CHANCE OF  
IT NOT WORKING

YOU SUGGESTED  
THIS BEFORE, AND I  
LIKED IT THEN BUT  
NOW... I DUNNO...

WHAT? WHAT'S  
WRONG WITH IT?

THE PART WHERE WE TRICK  
THEM INTO LEARNING HOW TO  
PLAY A COMPLICATED CARD  
GAME AND SPEND MONEY ON A  
TOURNAMENT, SO WE CAN HAVE  
SOMEONE THEY DON'T EVEN  
KNOW INVADE THEIR PRIVACY?

WELL, WHEN  
YOU PUT IT LIKE  
THAT



As a result of convoluted magic dream nonsense, Grace was one million percent\* certain both Catalina and Rhoda had magic marks that would grant them spells

\* Possible hyperbole



She was also certain Justin had a magic mark, however, but he did not appear to have one.

IT'S GOTTA BE SOMEWHERE...

GRACE



A magic mark will vanish as a result of a magic awakening, but awakening tends to mean getting more spells.

As far as they knew, Justin had not gotten any new spells.



Grace, a hybrid of squirrel, human, and maybe-elf, felt secrets were keeping her distant from Rhoda, her friend and former history tutor.



She wanted to tell Rhoda everything about herself, and felt Rhoda having magic would open that door for her.



Amid concerns about sharing everyone's secrets, and potentially getting Rhoda and Catalina entangled with secret magic police when they don't even have magic, however



..It was begrudgingly agreed that they should try to covertly find out if Rhoda and Catalina actually have magic before revealing any big secrets to them...





I'M ONLY SUGGESTING THE TOURNAMENT BECAUSE IT GETS THEM HERE AT A PREDICTABLE TIME WHEN IT WOULDN'T BE WEIRD FOR LUKE TO BE AROUND.

AND MAYBE EXTRA REVENUE FOR MY UNCLE'S COMIC SHOP

IF WE CAN THINK OF A BETTER OPTION FOR WHEN AND WHERE, THAT'S FINE, BUT LUKE IS THE ANSWER TO THIS PROBLEM.



I GET WHAT YOU MEAN, JUSTIN, BUT

I DIDN'T LIKE IT WHEN HE "LOOKED" AT ME WITHOUT ASKING, AND I WASN'T EVEN TRICKED INTO BEING HERE



GRACE, WE'RE TRYING TO COVERTLY FIND OUT IF THEY HAVE MAGIC SO WE DON'T RECKLESSLY REVEAL SECRETS OR DRAG THEM INTO ANYTHING.

AND IF THEY HAVE MAGIC, THERE'S ALL SORTS OF HELPFUL STUFF WE CAN TELL THEM!

THAT TEDD CAN TELL THEM

WE MIGHT BE INVADING THEIR PRIVACY BUT IT'S FOR GOOD REASONS.



I KNOW, AND IF I SAW THE EMISSARY OF MAGIC AGAIN, I'D JUST ASK HIM IF THOSE TWO HAVE MAGIC.

BUT IT STILL FEELS WRONG TO SET THEM UP TO BE SPIED ON.



ASKING THE EMISSARY'S OKAY, BUT A LUKE LOOK ISN'T?

THE EMISSARY ALREADY KNOWS! AND THE WHOLE REASON WE'RE DOING THIS IS BECAUSE I'M PRETTY SURE HE ALREADY TOLD ME! I'D JUST BE GETTING CONFIRMATION!



THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IN THE END RESULT IS THAT LUKE WOULD KNOW TOO.

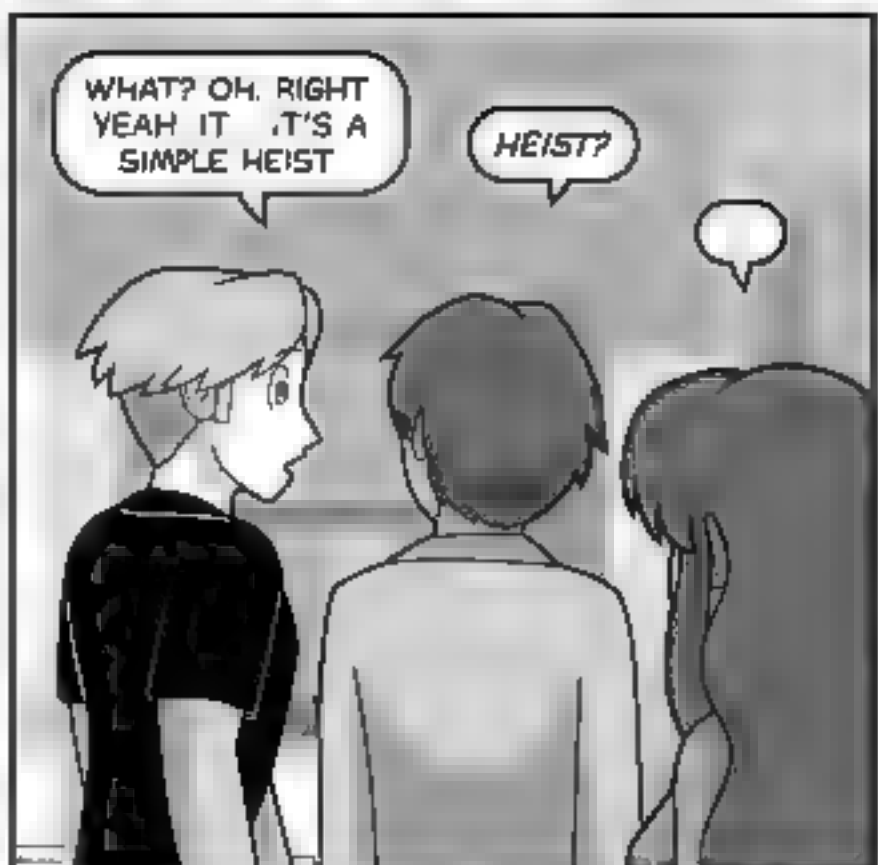
AND WE'D HAVE SET UP MY FRIENDS TO GET SPIED ON.



SPEAKING OF SPYING, THE SHOP'S EMPTY, RIGHT?

YEAH, I THINK SO.

I'LL CHECK.



One spy check later

YEAH. THE SHOP'S  
EMPTY, BUT I THINK I  
JUST SAW LUKE PULL  
INTO THE PARKING LOT

GOOD! WE'LL HAVE TIME  
TO TALK BEFORE PEOPLE  
START SHOWING UP!

HE IS HERE RIGHT?

YEAH HE'S  
HERE BUT

BUT?

HE'S  
MOV'NG  
SLOW?

LIKE,  
HE'S HURT  
OR SOME-  
THING

HE'S WHAT?!

DING

HEY

OW

'SUP?

One recap of Justin's plan later, though with names withheld







OHHH...

THAT  
MAKES  
SENSE.



WHAT?! NO  
IT DOESN'T!

WE WERE  
BEING  
STUPID!



NO YOU WEREN'T! WHAT WERE  
YOU SUPPOSED TO THINK WAS  
HAPPENING?

HONESTLY,  
"CHOSEN TO  
BE HEROES"  
MAKES MORE  
SENSE THAN  
WHAT  
ACTUALLY  
HAPPENED.



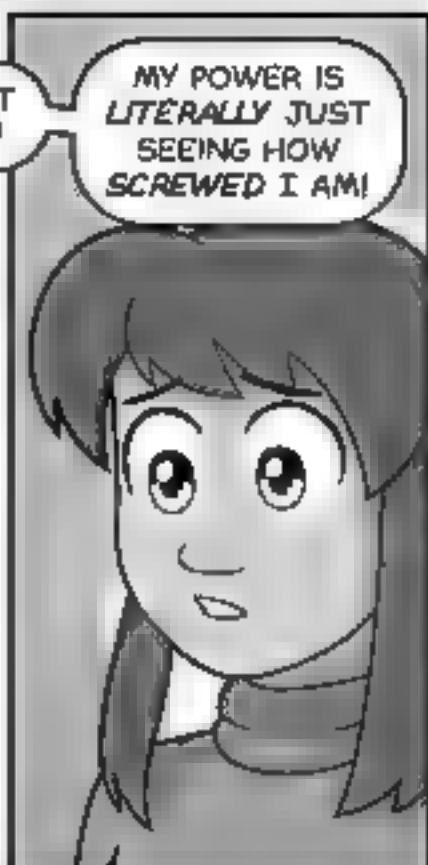
THAT'S NICE OF YOU TO SAY,  
BUT THERE'S HARDLY ANY CRIME  
AROUND HERE, MONSTERS...

...ARE A THING, WHICH IS  
WEIRD, BUT INFREQUENT...



...AND EVEN IF THERE  
WERE MORE CRIMINALS  
AND MONSTERS, WHAT  
AM I GONNA DO?

LOOK AT  
THEM?!



MY POWER IS  
LITERALLY JUST  
SEEING HOW  
SCREWED I AM!



ANYWAY, I'M  
SORRY, BUT...

JUSTIN?



SUPER HEROES...

JUSTIN NO.

SORRY SORRY  
INVOLUNTARY  
GEEK OUT



THOUGH YOU KNOW, THERE  
ARE UTILITY SUPER HEROES.  
THEY DON'T ALL FIGHT



JUSTIN.

RIGHT SORRY

ANYWAY, WE FIGURED IT  
COULDN'T BE COINCIDENCE  
THAT OUR WHOLE SMALL  
FRIEND GROUP GOT ABILITIES.



WE WERE CLEARLY CHOSEN  
FOR SOMETHING IMPORTANT

BUT THERE WEREN'T ANY MONSTERS OR  
CRIME, SO WE FIGURED I WAS SUPPOSED  
TO FIND OTHER PEOPLE LIKE US.



WE THOUGHT WE'D  
FIND SOME VILLAINS  
THAT WAY

YOU WENT LOOKING  
FOR VILLAINS?!



I'M NOT PROUD  
OF IT, BUT YEAH



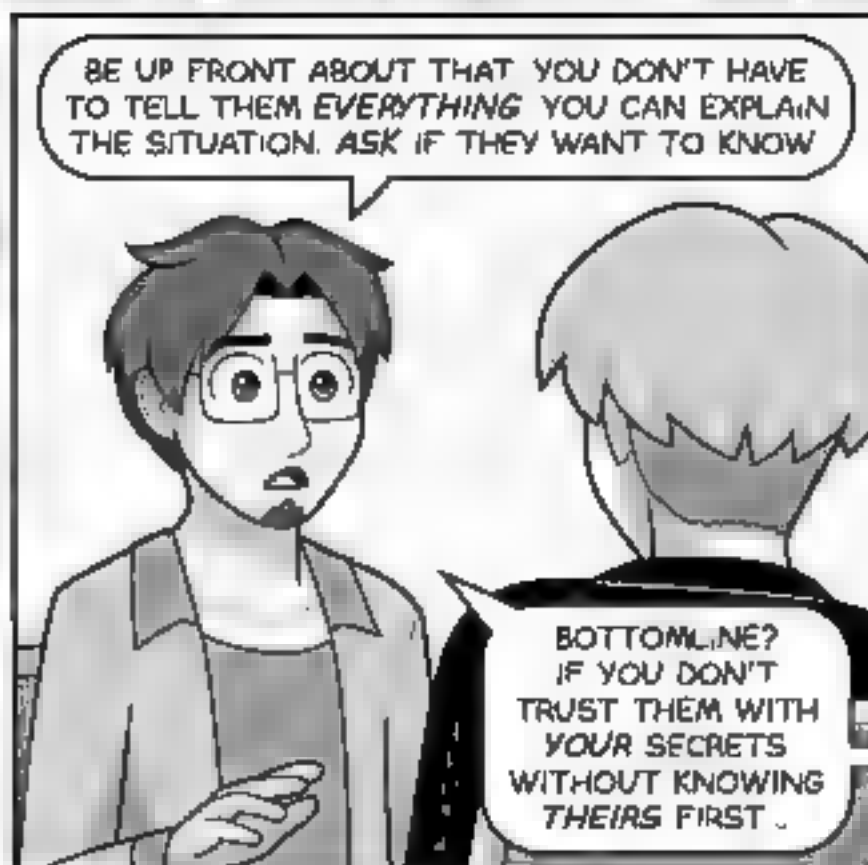
DID YOU FIND ANY?



PEOPLE WITH  
ABILITIES? YES

VILLAINS? I  
DON'T KNOW?







After a period of awkward small talk, silences, and an argument about superhero physical anatomy that cannot be repeated in polite company, the Sunday card tournament began.

A bit of privacy restored, Justin released some pent up pressure.

I MEAN. I GET LUKE'S ARGUMENT IT'S A GOOD ARGUMENT EVEN IF OUR SITUATION ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS TRUST...

BUT IT SOUNDED LIKE HE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO USE HIS SPELL IN GENERAL

LUKE'S SPELL MAKES HIM FEEL LIKE HE'S SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WITH POWER WHILE HE HAS NONE

IT MAKES HIM FEEL HELPLESS

HE I GUESS HE DID SAY SOMETHING THAT MIGHT SUGGEST THAT

I SAW IT IN HIS EYES.

I'VE FELT THE SAME WAY

OKAY

I'VE DECIDED NOT TO PESTER LUKE ABOUT THIS LATER.



Morning, that same Sunday..

ELLIOT, I NEED TO  
TALK TO YOU ABOUT  
SOMETHING.

SURE SUSAN  
WHAT'S UP?

I'D RATHER NOT  
SAY ON THE PHONE.  
CAN WE TALK AT  
YOUR HOUSE?

UM. OKAY?

Sunday afternoon, the Dunkel's guest room  
with the fold out sofa bed (AKA where Elliot  
and Susan record movie reviews for fun)



I NEED YOU TO ASK ME A QUESTION. SO  
I CAN ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION. SO  
I CAN ASK CATALINA THAT QUESTION,  
SO SHE CAN ASK ME THAT QUESTION.

UM...  
WHAT?



I'M GOING TO ASK  
CATALINA WHAT  
KIND OF MAGIC SHE  
THINKS I WOULD  
HAVE BASED ON MY  
PERSONALITY

I WANT TO FRAME IT AS  
SOMETHING YOU ASKED ME,  
AND IT WILL SOUND MORE  
NATURAL IF IT'S TECHNICALLY  
TRUE. AND IF WE REALLY DID  
HAVE THE CONVERSATION.



SO.. YOU  
TALK ABOUT  
THIS..

ASK HER WHAT MAGIC SHE  
THINKS YOU'D HAVE, AND.

THEN YOU SAY YOU THINK  
SHE'D HAVE CAT MAGIC, WHICH  
GRACE THINKS SHE HAS. ?

YES



IF SHE DOES HAVE  
CAT MAGIC, WON'T IT  
BE SUPER OBVIOUS  
YOU'RE FISHING?

THAT'S MY  
INTENTION YES.

ZA?



Talk about what magic would suit our personal ties. Suggest cat magic for Catalina

Did Catalina make a "holy carp, Susan knows" face?

Yes

Suggest talking about it more later while implying that you also have magic (other than the big hammers)

No

Come up with some weird magic to say Sarah should have

IF SHE HAS CAT MAGIC, IT WILL BE **OBVIOUS** TO HER THAT I KNOW, AND IT SHOULD BE **OBVIOUS** TO ME THAT **SHE KNOWS** THAT I KNOW

IF SHE DOES HAVE CAT MAGIC, I'LL EFFECTIVELY HAVE TOLD HER THAT I KNOW, AND WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT MORE IN PRIVATE LATER



IF SHE DOESN'T, IT'S A FUN LUNCHTIME CONVERSATION, AND CATALINA DOESN'T GET UNNECESSARILY DRAGGED INTO A TANGLED WEB OF STRESSFUL SECRETS AND GOVERNMENT CONSPIRACIES.



AND WE DON'T TELL OUR SECRETS TO THE **LOUDEST** PERSON WE KNOW



HEY! CATALINA IS **FIERCELY LOYAL**, AND WOULD NEVER INTENTIONALLY SPREAD OTHER PEOPLE'S SECRETS!

BUT YES. SHE'S TERRIBLE AT KEEPING SECRETS. AND SHE'D BE THE FIRST TO TELL YOU THAT



HEY CATALINA. WANNA KNOW A SECRET?

I WAS JUST GOING TO SAY I LIKE PINEAPPLE ON PIZZA

NOOO, DON'T TELL ME! I'M TERRIBLE WITH SECRETS!



BY LUNCH EVERYONE KNEW



OF COURSE, IF SHE AND RHODA DO HAVE MAGIC, AND HAVE PRESUMABLY HAD IT FOR A WHILE, AND WE ONLY KNOW BECAUSE OF MAGIC DREAMS...



...THEN CATALINA'S GOTTEN WAY **BETTER** AT KEEPING SECRETS.



I DON'T LIKE TESTING WHETHER SHE CAN KEEP SECRETS. BUT IT'S KIND OF IMPORTANT SHE CAN KEEP THESE SECRETS.





I MIGHT NOT WANT TO TOUCH THEM, OR BE WITHIN A FEW FEET OF THEM, BUT DOGS HAVE A LOT OF POSITIVE QUALITIES.

HARUMPH.

HONESTLY, I'M SURPRISED YOU DISLIKE DOGS SO MUCH.

I DON'T DISLIKE DOGS! IT'S DIFFERENT TO BE CALLED A DOG.

ALSO, I'M A CAT PERSON.

QUALITIES LIKE PROTECTING PEOPLE?

I WASN'T CALLING YOU A DOG. I WAS JUST THINKING OF SOMETHING SUPER HERO-LIKE THAT WASN'T A SUPER HERO

A WELL TRAINED DOG IS BASICALLY A LITTLE SUPER HERO. PROTECTIVE, HEROIC, VERY LITTLE REGARD FOR WHAT'S ACTUALLY LEGAL.

YOU'RE RIGHT I'M SORRY DOG MAGIC IS FINE

PLUS IT PERFECTLY LEADS INTO YOU SAYING CATALINA WOULD HAVE CAT MAGIC.

OKAY, GOOD. SO...

WHAT KIND OF MAGIC DO YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE?

HM. ICE MAGIC?

ICE MAGIC?!





A DOG...

IS THAT  
REALLY  
WHAT BEING  
A HERO IS?



I GUESS ANYONE CAN BE A HERO IF THEY  
SELFLESSLY RISE TO A CHALLENGE AND  
HELP PEOPLE, BUT IF YOU'RE SPECIFICALLY A  
HERO WHO *FIGHTS*, LIKE A SUPER HERO...

...IS BEING  
DOG-LIKE  
THE THING  
TO DO?



A PROBLEM WITH THAT  
IS DOGS DON'T THINK  
FOR THEMSELVES

NOT ABOUT  
MORALITY,  
ANYWAY

A GOOD DOG  
WILL JUST AS  
SOON BE LOYAL  
TO A *DARK*  
LORD OF EVIL  
AS ANYONE  
ELSE SO LONG  
AS THEY'RE  
GIVEN ENOUGH  
TREATS AND  
EAR SCRITCHES.



A HERO NEEDS  
TO HOLD TO THEIR  
OWN PRINCIPLES,  
AND REFUSE TO  
DO THINGS THAT  
DON'T FOLLOW  
THEM. THEY CAN'T  
GO FULL DOGGO.

BUT VILLAINS CAN  
DO EXACTLY THAT  
TOO RIGHT?

THEY JUST HAVE  
EVIL PRINCIPLES?  
OR... AT LEAST  
MISGUIDED ONES?



## PRINCIPLES

KICK PUPPIES  
CLUB BABY SEALS  
STEAL CANDY \*

\* SPECIFICALLY  
FROM BABIES

SO A HERO  
HAS TO THINK FOR  
THEMSELVES...

ACT ON, AND  
HOLD TO, THEIR  
PRINCIPLES...

BUT THOSE  
PRINCIPLES CAN'T  
BE SELFISH, AND...  
THEY PROBABLY  
HAVE TO BE  
FLEXIBLE, TOO?

LIKE YOU CAN'T BE LIKE THAT JACKASS  
WIZARD ABRAHAM WHO TRIED TO KILL ELLEN  
BECAUSE OF SOME VOW TO DESTROY EVERYONE  
AND EVERYTHING CREATED BY SOME DIAMOND



SO YOU HAVE  
TO STRICTLY STICK  
TO YOUR PRINCIPLES,  
EXCEPT WHEN YOU  
DON'T?

OR MAYBE SOME  
PRINCIPLES ARE JUST  
HIGHER PRIORITY  
THAN OTHERS?

THIS IS  
COMPLICATED.  
MAYBE I  
SHOULD TAKE  
NOTES.



A DOG...

IS THAT  
REALLY  
WHAT BEING  
A HERO IS?



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LIKE YOU CAN'T BE LIKE THAT JACKASS  
WIZARD ABRAHAM WHO TRIED TO KILL ELLEN  
BECAUSE OF SOME VOW TO DESTROY EVERYONE  
AND EVERYTHING CREATED BY SOME DIAMOND



SO YOU HAVE  
TO STRICTLY STICK  
TO YOUR PRINCIPLES,  
EXCEPT WHEN YOU  
DON'T?

OR MAYBE SOME  
PRINCIPLES ARE JUST  
HIGHER PRIORITY  
THAN OTHERS?

THIS IS  
COMPLICATED.  
MAYBE I  
SHOULD TAKE  
NOTES.





I KNOW THIS IS HARD TO BELIEVE BUT SOMEDAY?

YOU'LL BE STRONG.

AND FREE











Monday morning,  
Sarah and Susan  
arrive at Moperville  
North High School ..



TODAY'S THE DAY EITHER I  
CONFIRM CATALINA HAS MAGIC...

I HAVE MUCH  
TO TEACH YOU.



OR I CONFIRM CATALINA DOESN'T  
HAVE MAGIC, AND DOESN'T NEED  
THE STRESS OF SECRET KEEPING.  
OR ENTANGLEMENT WITH MAGIC  
GOVERNMENT SECRET KEEPERS.

I SHIELD YOU!

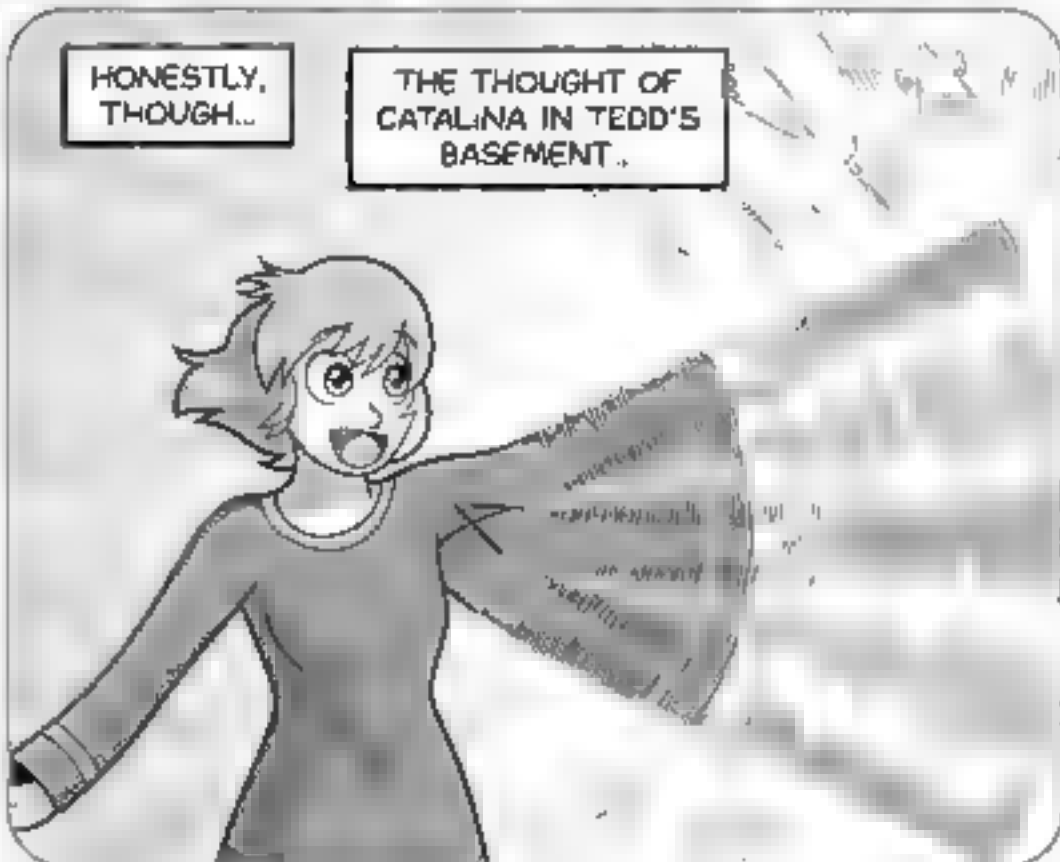
FROM  
WHAT?

EXACTLY!  
GOOD!



HONESTLY,  
THOUGH...

THE THOUGHT OF  
CATALINA IN TEDD'S  
BASEMENT..



STILL, HAS TO BE DONE.

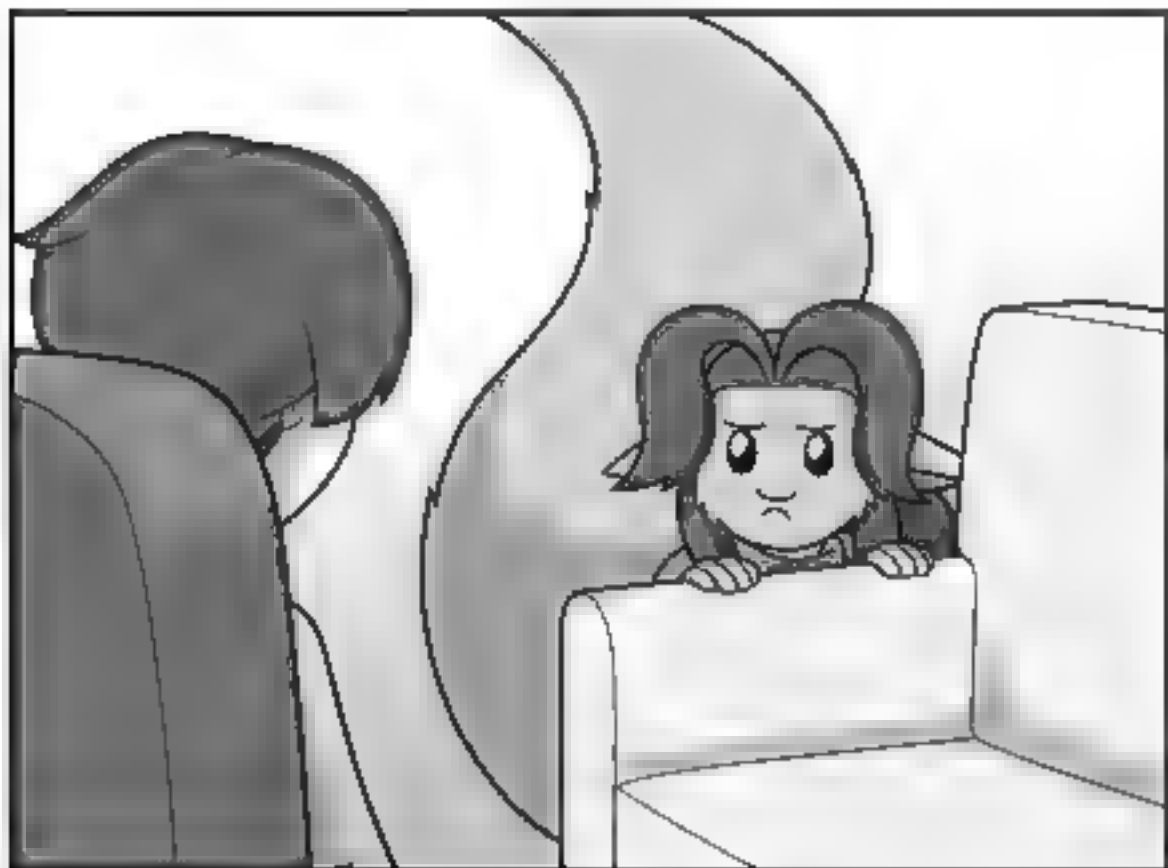
DEFINITELY WAIT  
UNTIL LUNCH FOOD  
GIVES POWER.



'SUP, DUDES!



NO ONE IS ALL THERE  
ON A MONDAY MORNING





WHAT'S  
GOTTEN  
INTO  
CATALINA?

THIS WOULD BE BUSINESS  
AS USUAL IN THE MIDDLE  
OF A TUESDAY, BUT FIRST  
THING ON A *MONDAY*?

SOME-  
THING'S  
UP



CATS CAN  
BE WEIRDLY  
ENERGETIC.  
COULD IT BE  
CAT-MAGIC?

NO NO NO. THAT'S  
*CONFIRMATION BIAS*,  
SUSAN. AND SHE  
*PROBABLY* WOULD'VE  
LANDED ON HER  
FEET IF IT WAS?



**PURR-R-R-R-R**



SHE'S JUST IN A GOOD  
MOOD FOR SOME REASON.  
SHE'LL TELL US WHY IF  
SHE WANTS TO AND...



WAIT A MINUTE  
SOMEONE IN A  
RELATIONSHIP WHO'S  
IN AN INEXPLICABLY  
GOOD MOOD?



HAVE I JUST WATCHED TOO  
MANY MOVIES, OR COULD HER  
MOOD BE BECAUSE THIS LAST  
WEEKEND WAS THE FIRST TIME  
SHE AND HER GIRLFRIEND...



SUSAN, ARE YOU  
OKAY? YOU LOOK  
A LITTLE...

**THINGS!**



"THINGS"?

ARE  
FINE

THINGS ARE FINE.





Later, at Moperville South High School, Diane and her girlfriend, Lucy, sat down to lunch

Rhoda had lunch with them, too, but Diane and Lucy brought lunches from home, and Rhoda had scampered off to a lunch line for pizza



Diane, Susan's distant aunt (it's complicated), knew of Susan's intent to find out if Rhoda's girlfriend, and consequently Rhoda, had magic



Diane was a literary genius, and the world's greatest detective (according to Rhoda), and she had her own plan for determining whether Rhoda and Catalina had magic

Do absolutely nothing

Obviously, Rhoda would have told Diane if she had magic, and Susan was wasting her time.



Still, Tedd had said spells suit the magic user, and the size-manipulation magic Rhoda supposedly had would be a perfect fit for her

Rhoda felt small, and Diane knew Rhoda had fantasies about swapping sizes around

Rhoda would only briefly say things that suggested this, but Diane was sure it was true



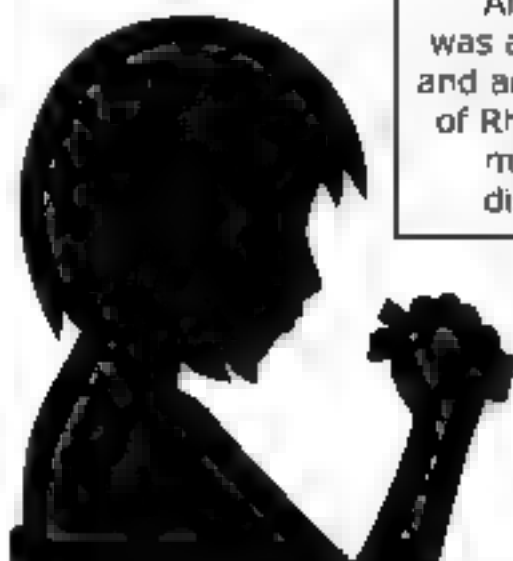
There was also the mystery of a giant boar that could be explained by Rhoda accidentally growing it, and that was the same day Rhoda met Catalina

If both of them did have magic, Diane knew that them getting it might somehow be linked to that incident.



Whenever Diane considered the possibility of Rhoda having magic and not telling her, however, it was like dividing all the other evidence by zero

All she felt was a logic error, and any possibility of Rhoda having magic was dismissed



She had felt this error many times



DIANE I  
FORGOT MY  
MATH HOME-  
WORK!

WE CAN GET  
IT DONE REAL  
QUICK!



I FORGOT TO READ THE BOOK  
FOR HOMEWORK BECAUSE I WAS  
READING ANOTHER BOOK!

I'LL SUM IT  
UP FOR YOU!



THERE'S A BOY WHO REALLY  
WON'T TAKE THE HINT!

I'LL MAKE SURE HE  
BACKS OFF! HEY, LUCY?



I DON'T KNOW IF DOGS  
ARE ACTUALLY HAPPY WHEN  
THEY DOGGY GRIN!

THEY'RE HAPPY AND  
THEY LOVE YOU!



I HAVE MAGIC, AND I MADE  
THAT BOAR BIG. AND NOW IT'S  
DEAD, AND I KNOW IT TRIED TO  
HURT ME, BUT IT WAS A WILD  
ANIMAL AND DIDN'T KNOW ANY  
BETTER. AND.



THAT'S WHAT  
WOULD'VE HAPPENED  
STOP OBSESSING.



WHEN SOMETHING  
UPSETS RHODA, SHE  
COMES TO ME

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT

PIZZA PIZZA



LINE  
CUT



Humans of this world did not know they could naturally sense the magic power in others, but they could

Even those with knowledge of magic power missed this, because it was most often subtle, context sensitive, and not distinct from other senses.

For example, magic power being a beneficial trait to pass on meant it could make someone appear more attractive

Given that this was roughly equivalent to someone having excellent hygiene, however, no one was going to use this to pick strong magic users out of a crowd

Less subtle were the scars on the back of one's neck after enraging someone who had titanic magic power



**BACK OF  
THE LINE,  
JACKASS.**



LUNCH.

JUST CASUALLY BRING UP THE FUN QUESTION, AND GAUGE CATALINA'S RESPONSE TO



GAH!

CAT NAPPING!

CATALINA?



BWUH?

OH. HEY



CATALINA, WERE... WERE YOU ASLEEP?

WHY AM I ASKING SHE SO WAS



EH? OH, UH.

MAYBE I DIDN'T SLEEP WELL LAST NIGHT

OR THE NIGHT BEFORE



REALLY? YOU WERE FULL OF ENERGY THIS MORNING. IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

EVERYTHING'S FINE! I MIGHT HAVE A LIED A TEENSY LITTLE BIT ABOUT NOT NEEDING CAFFEINE

SPEAKING OF, I'M GOING TO GO GET SOME



SO SHE WASN'T ENERGETIC BECAUSE OF THINGS?

OR MAYBE EXCITEMENT ABOUT THINGS IS WHY SHE DIDN'T SLEEP WELL, OR...

I'VE GOT TO STOP THINKING ABOUT THINGS.



MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY THOSE ARCADE GAMES THE NEXT TIME WE'RE AT THE BOWLING ALLEY?

THAT COULD BE FUN WITHOUT BOYS TRYING TO SHOW US HOW GOOD THEY ARE AT THEM.

WE COULD HAVE A RE-MATCH WITH JUSTIN AND HIS BOYFRIEND SOMEDAY, TOO.

EH, MAYBE. JUSTIN'S OKAY BUT HIS BOYFRIEND'S LIKE A FRIGHTENED BUNNY

AND NOT IN A CUTE WAY LIKE RHODA.

SPEAKING OF... EH? RHODA, YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE. THERE WAS JUST SOME JERK WHO CUT IN FRONT OF ME IN LINE AND MADE FUN OF MY HEIGHT

**WHO WAS IT?!**

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT I TOLD HIM TO GO TO THE BACK OF THE LINE. THEN HE SAID HE WASN'T HUNGRY AND RAN OFF

YOU... WHAT?

REALLY?

I'M JUST ANNOYED PEOPLE THINK THEY CAN PUSH ME AROUND LIKE THAT

MY ENTIRE PLAN IS BASED ON GAUGING CATALINA'S REACTION TO MY SAYING SHE WOULD HAVE CAT MAGIC. I ALSO NEED TO SOUND NONCHALANT IN CASE SHE DOESN'T HAVE MAGIC.

WITH HER TIRED AND ME... DISTRACTED, I DON'T THINK THIS IS GOING TO WORK!

I-I THINK YOU'D HAVE CAT MAGIC!

OH WELL. I'LL DO IT TOMORROW.

IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S ANY RUSH.

## AND THEN THE REST OF MONDAY HAPPENED

Wordy spell books!

Confused Tedd!

New side effects and imitations!

**THERE'S A RUSH!**

No Grace-dream explaining just what-the-heck-even yet!

IF CATALINA AND HER GIRLFRIEND HAVE MAGIC, THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS!

Tuesday. Lunch. Again

**JUST DO IT! IT'S OKAY IF YOU'RE TOO OBVIOUS! IF SHE DOESN'T HAVE MAGIC, SHE'LL JUST THINK YOU'RE AWKWARD, AND IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO GET THIS DONE!**

SO HEY ELLIOT ASKED ME WHAT KIND OF MAGIC I THINK HE'D HAVE BASED ON HIS PERSONALITY AND IT WAS FUN, CATALINA, I THINK YOU'D HAVE CAT MAGIC.

**THANK GOODNESS OBVIOUS IS OKAY**





WHAT ABOUT...



DOG MAGIC?

REALLY,  
SARAH?



DOG MAGIC? IS  
THAT BECAUSE  
OF LOYALTY AND  
BRAVERY OR  
SOMETHING?

BECAUSE IF  
IT'S ABOUT  
DROOLING  
AND BUTT  
SNIFFING...



I WAS  
THINKING  
LOYALTY AND  
BARKING.

BUT YEAH, BRAVERY!

I'LL TAKE IT!



I ACTUALLY SAID  
ELLIOT WOULD  
HAVE DOG MAGIC.



YOU DID? WELL,  
I GUESS WE ARE  
KINDA SIMILAR.

MAYBE I  
SHOULD TAKE  
JAPANESE  
MARTIAL  
ARTS



CATALINA ISN'T  
THIS GOOD A LIAR.  
IF SHE HAD CAT  
MAGIC AND  
THOUGHT I KNEW,  
SHE WOULDN'T  
REACT LIKE THIS.

SHE DIDN'T  
JUMP AT THE  
DOG OPTION,  
EITHER, WHICH  
SHE MIGHT'VE  
DONE IF TRYING  
TO HIDE HAVING  
CAT MAGIC.

MAYBE SHE  
REALLY DOESN'T  
HAVE MAGIC?



IF PICKING MAGIC FOR YOU, SUSAN,  
I THINK I'D GO WITH... ICE MAGIC?

OH, COME ON!



WHAT ABOUT...



DOG MAGIC?

REALLY,  
SARAH?



DOG MAGIC? IS  
THAT BECAUSE  
OF LOYALTY AND  
BRAVERY OR  
SOMETHING?

BECAUSE IF  
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YOU DID? WELL,  
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MAYBE SHE  
REALLY DOESN'T  
HAVE MAGIC?



IF PICKING MAGIC FOR YOU, SUSAN,  
I THINK I'D GO WITH... ICE MAGIC?

OH, COME ON!



Though a fun discussion was had, and many assurances given by Sarah and Catalina that Susan was "just that cool", there was nothing to suggest that Catalina really did have magic.

It was eventually agreed that Sarah would be able to create illusions of her drawings, but this did not actually resolve anything.



LUKE WAS RIGHT



I DON'T REALLY KNOW  
RHODA THAT WELL

I'M WORRIED  
HOW SHE'D REACT  
TO KNOWING I'M  
AN ALIEN-HUMAN-  
SQUIRREL-AJEN  
HYBRID



I DON'T KNOW IF  
I CAN TRUST HER  
WITH MY SECRETS.

I DON'T TRUST  
HER ENOUGH TO  
JUST TELL HER  
EVERYTHING.

I'M NOT  
COMFORTABLE  
TELLING HER  
MY SECRETS  
WITHOUT  
KNOWING ONE  
OF HER.

AS MUCH AS  
I DON'T  
WANT TO PUT  
IT THAT WAY,  
I DO WANT  
LEVERAGE



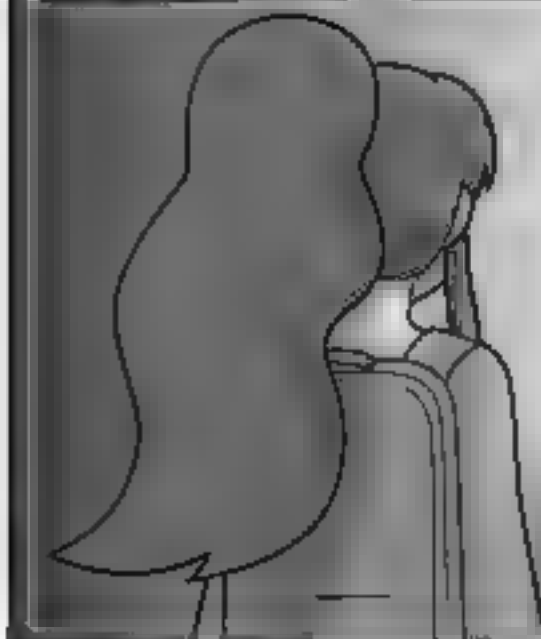
I WANT TO  
BECOME CLOSER  
FRIENDS WITH  
HER, BUT...

...ARE  
WE EVEN  
FRIENDS  
NOW?

ARE WE JUST  
ACQUAINTANCES  
WHO LIKE EACH  
OTHER?

SO LONG  
AS I HAVE  
TO HIDE WHO  
I AM FROM  
PEOPLE...

...IS IT EVEN  
POSSIBLE  
FOR ME TO  
MAKE NEW  
FRIENDS?



IS THAT  
FRIENDSHIP?



Three days ago, the Saturday of the party, and of Rhoda and Catalina seeing a movie late at night.

SAT	SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT



Did you sleep better last night?

I think so. Adrenaline is finally coming down after Saturday.

As scary as it was, it really left me feeling PUMPED!

How are you doing?

Good! I haven't gotten any more chances to be assertive, but



**YOUNG LADY!**

**NO TEXTING IN THESE HALLS OF LEARNING!**

THIS IS A SANCTUARY OF ENLIGHTENMENT NOT A PLACE TO GOSSIP ABOUT BOYS!

**GET TO CLASS!**



MY CLASS IS RIGHT THERE, AND I'M TEXTING TO MAKE SURE MY GIRLFRIEND IS OKAY

I WILL BE DONE IN A MOMENT

Okay, so I got a detention, but I DID get a chance to be assertive





WE'RE NOT  
GOING TO GET TO  
THE CAR IN TIME!



CATALINA!  
EMERGENCY  
PLAN!

WHAT?! I  
WAS JOKING  
WHEN I--



TURN LEFT  
THERE AND  
DO IT! FAST!

O-O-KAY!



STOP IT! THIS IS THE  
STUPIDEST THING YOU  
GUYS HAVE EVER--



MOVE!

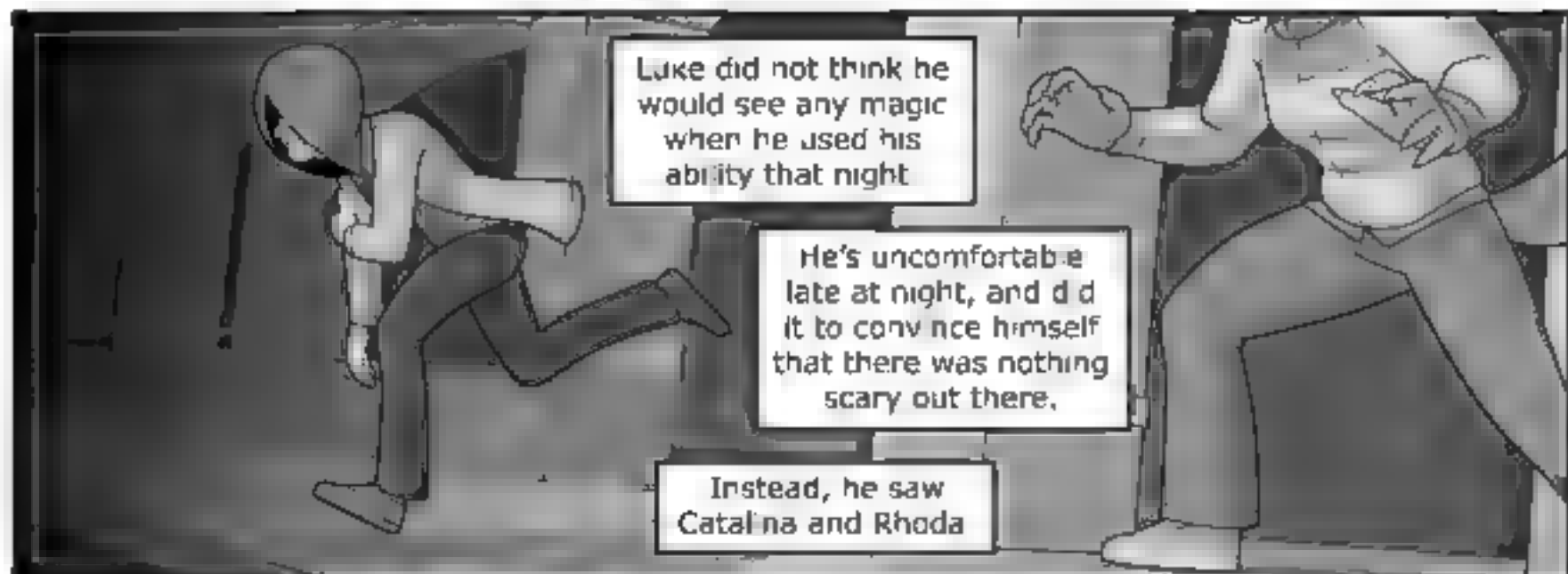
SHOVE!

RUN!

AAAAAAA!!!







Monday right before gym for Tedd and Eliot, and before realizations about spells working differently

SAT	SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT
							

I GET NOT WANTING TO TELL TOO MANY PEOPLE BEFORE WE'RE READY, AND I GET THAT CATALINA IS BASICALLY A WALKING LOUDSPEAKER OF CHAOS

WHAT I DON'T GET IS BEING WORRIED ABOUT GETTING THEM "ENTANGLED" WITH THE PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS WHO HAVE BEEN NOTHING BUT GOOD TO US



YOUR DAD, AND PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR DAD, HAVE BEEN NOTHING BUT GOOD TO US

I DOUBT THINGS WOULD'VE GONE AS SMOOTHLY IF YOUR DAD WASN'T WELL, YOUR DAD.



MAYBE NOT AS SMOOTHLY BUT

BUT THEY WORK IN SECRET ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF KEEPING SECRETS AND LACK ANY PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

LIKE, WHAT EVEN HAPPENS IF THEY ARREST SOMEONE FOR MESSING AROUND WITH MAGIC?

IT CAN'T BE A FAIR AND PUBLIC TRIAL.



I DON'T KNOW, BUT MY DAD WOULD'VE QUIT IF IT WAS ANYTHING REALLY BAD



AND DIDN'T YOUR DAD, THE ONE GUY WE KNOW'S GOOD WARN US ABOUT THE NEW OLD GUY IN CHARGE ARTHUR PUTTING SECRECY OVER INDIVIDUALS?



THAT WAS BEFORE MAGIC BECOMING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE WAS AN ACCEPTED INEVITABILITY

NOW HE'S GIVING ME A LAB WITH THE SPECIFIC GOAL OF MAKING THAT TRANSITION TO MAGIC BEING PUBLIC SAFELY



EVENTUALLY WHAT ABOUT IN THE MEANTIME?

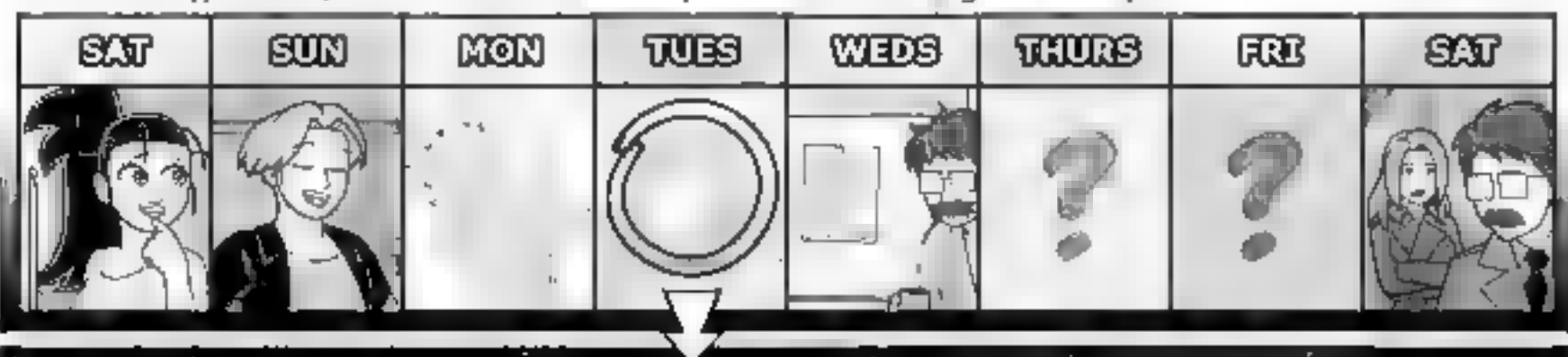


YOU DON'T KNOW ARTHUR LIKE I DO

TRUST ME HE'S A GOOD GUY



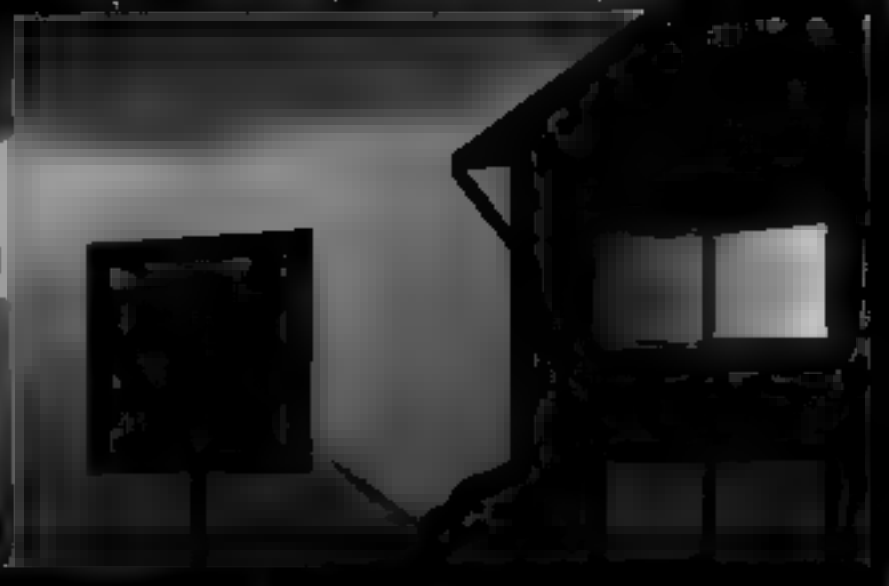
Late Tuesday, the day after it became clear spells were behaving differently.



In a hotel in Colorado, Special Agent Wolf was on the phone with his boss, Arthur, who was the head of paranormal investigations in Moperville, and its surrounding areas

Normally, Moperville wouldn't be the center of anything, but the abnormal frequency with which it had paranormal cases made a permanent presence mandatory

Incidentally, Moperville was nowhere near Colorado



THE TWO OF THEM AGREE, FOR ONCE

THEY THINK OUR SPELLS AND THOSE IN THE WANDS, HAVEN'T ACTUALLY CHANGED...

...AND WE'RE JUST SCRUB TRASH WHO NEVER KNEW HOW TO USE OUR SPELLS PROPERLY



I'M REASONABLY CERTAIN I DIDN'T MEAN IT LIKE THAT?

I DID THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE EXPERTS AND THEY'RE LAW ENFORCEMENT IT'S INEXCUSABLE



AM I TO TAKE IT THEY ARE HAVING NO TROUBLE WITH THEIR SPELLS?

NONE. THEY WERE TAUGHT TO MANUALLY CONTROL ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR SPELLS

THEY MIGHT NEVER HAVE EVEN NOTICED ANYTHING WAS DIFFERENT



I FEAR WE TRULY ARE SCRUB TRASH.

PLEASE, SIR, IT JUST SOUNDS WEIRD WHEN YOU SAY IT

I WILL BE AS HIP AND COOL WITH MY SLANG AS I SO CHOOSE, AGENT WOLF



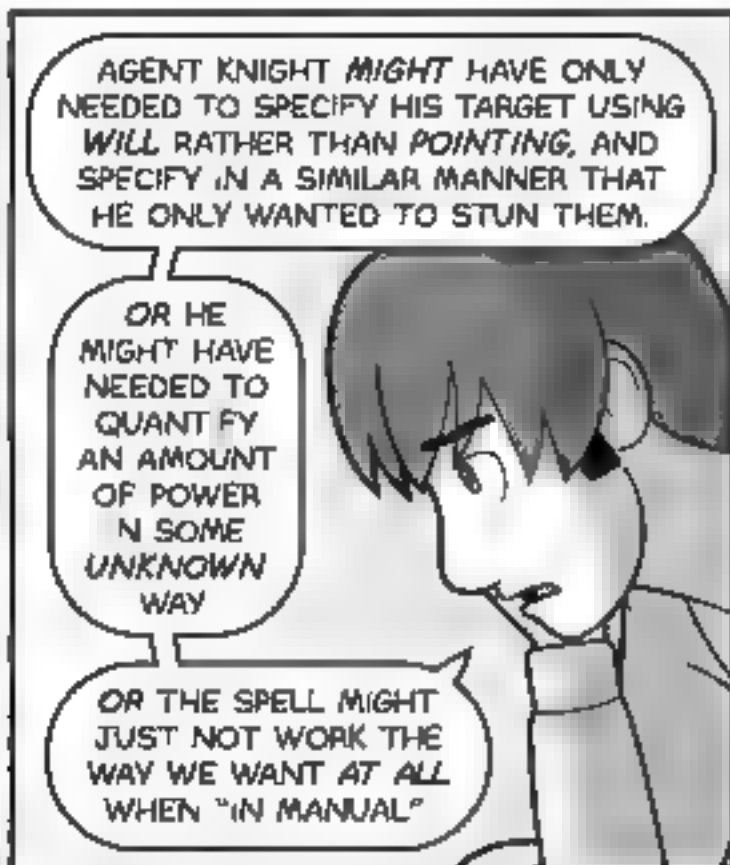
DOES THIS MEAN THE WANDS ARE... SALVAGEABLE?



IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO USE THE WANDS SAFELY..

~ER-HEM~

..BUUUUT IT'S NOT RECOMMENDED.



AGENT KNIGHT *MIGHT* HAVE ONLY NEEDED TO SPECIFY HIS TARGET USING *WILL* RATHER THAN *POINTING*, AND SPECIFY IN A SIMILAR MANNER THAT HE ONLY WANTED TO STUN THEM.

OR HE MIGHT HAVE NEEDED TO QUANTIFY AN AMOUNT OF POWER IN SOME UNKNOWN WAY

OR THE SPELL MIGHT JUST NOT WORK THE WAY WE WANT AT ALL WHEN "IN MANUAL"



SO THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW BUT TO EXPERIMENT

THE WANDS USE CUSTOM SPELLS WITH NO SPELL BOOKS CONNECTED WITH THEM. SO YEAH. WE'D NEED TO RISK MORE AGENTS GETTING SHOCKED



CUSTOM SPELLS MADE BY ME

NO. WE NEED NEW WANDS WITH NEW SPELLS.

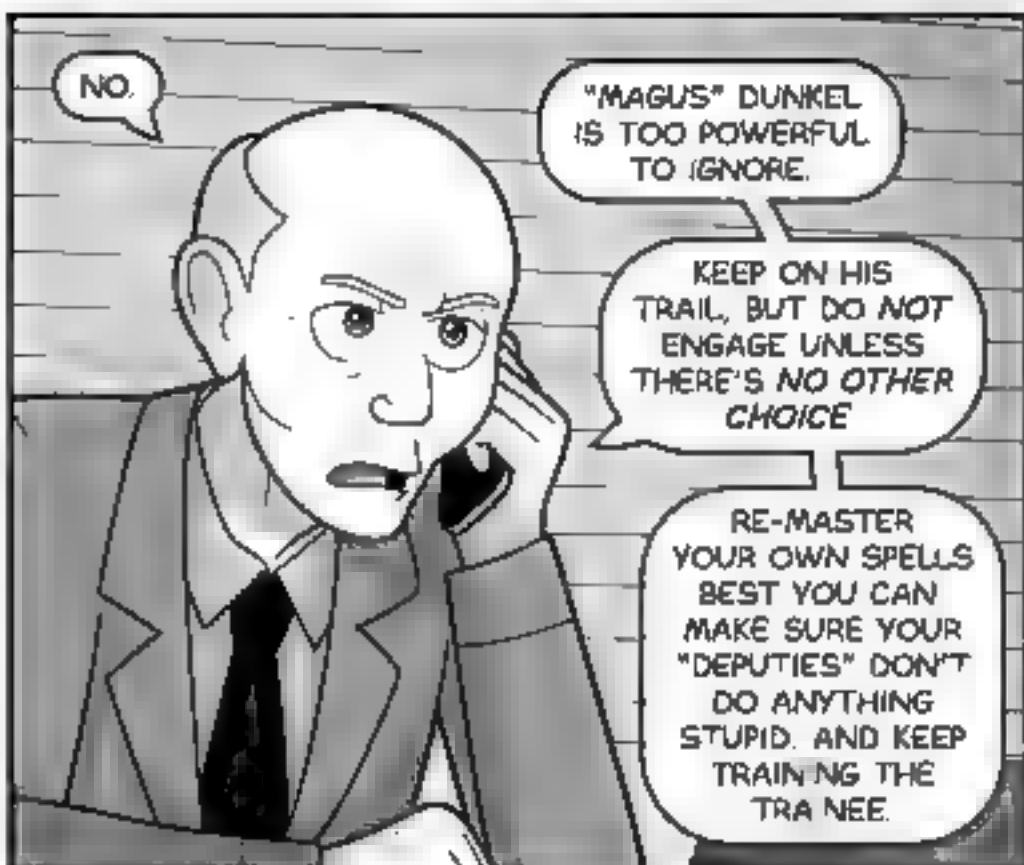


HOW DOES THIS AFFECT MY MISSION? DO WE COME BACK? THE FOSSIL CAN JUST TRACK HIM DOWN AGAIN LATER.

FOSSIL? I WAS NEVER IN THE GROUND.

HE'S CALLING YOU A DINOSAUR.

WHAT'S A DINOSAUR?



NO.

"MAGUS" DUNKEL IS TOO POWERFUL TO IGNORE.

KEEP ON HIS TRAIL, BUT DO NOT ENGAGE UNLESS THERE'S NO OTHER CHOICE

RE-MASTER YOUR OWN SPELLS BEST YOU CAN MAKE SURE YOUR "DEPUTIES" DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID. AND KEEP TRAINING THE TRA NEE.



GIVEN THE SITUATION. SHOULDN'T I AT LEAST SEND THE TRA NEE HOME?

NO SHE HAS A TALENT FOR DETECTING PEOPLE WHO ARE USING CONCEALMENT MAGIC SHE'S INVALUABLE

PLEASE, SIR, SHE'S VERY GRUMPY, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW HER HAIR WORKS

NONETHELESS





SIGH



Weird Science



HELLO DR. GERMAHN.

ARTHUR! YOUR APPRENTICE IS SCRUB TRASH!



SO THIS IS HOW AGENT WOLF FELT

WHAT?

NOTHING YOU'RE CALLING THIS LATE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT SOMETHING IN TEDD VERRES'S NOTES?



I'M CALLING BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU MIGHT NEED TO MAKE NEW WANDS WITH NEW SPELLS...

...AND IF THESE NOTES ARE TO BE BELIEVED...

TEDD VERRES MIGHT HAVE FOUND A WAY TO MAKE THAT A WHOLE LOT EASIER!



REALLY? THAT'S EXCELLENT NEWS!

HOW DOES THAT MAKE TEDD SCRUB TRASH?

HMPH SOUNDS WEIRD WHEN YOU SAY IT



BEFORE HE KNEW HE WAS A SEER, TEDD THOUGHT HE WAS CREATING WANDS BY USING A GLOVE HE HAD MADE.

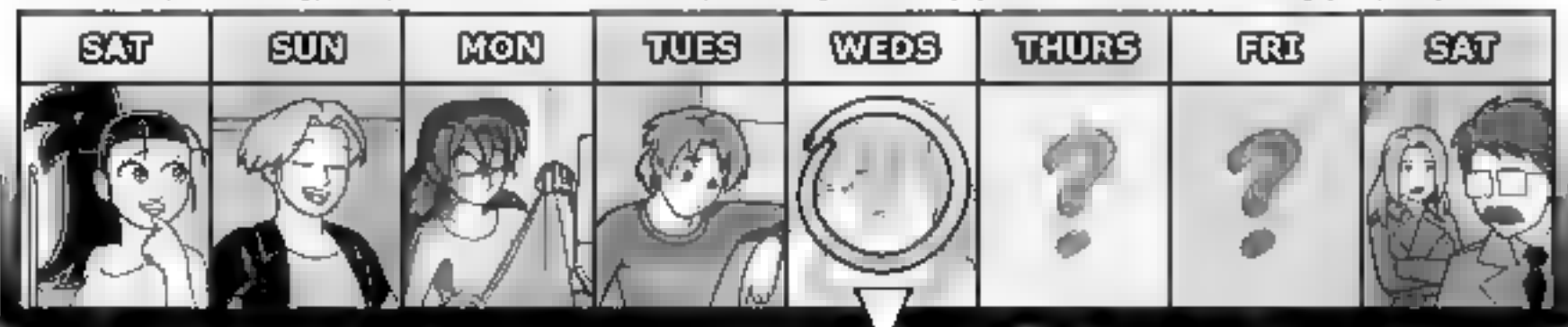
IT WAS CLEARLY INSPIRED BY URYUOM-TECH, BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW



OBVIOUSLY, HE DIDN'T ACTUALLY NEED THE GLOVE TO CREATE WANDS...

...BUT WHAT THIS GLOVE SUPPOSEDLY DID DO WAS MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO PRECISELY PROGRAM SPELLS ON A COMPUTER!

Wednesday morning, very much before school, and significantly prior to brains working properly



In a dream the night before, Grace had a barrel of exposition thrown at her by the Emissary of Magic.

She had learned of spells shifting from being mostly automated to requiring more manual decisions.



The potential to make spells easier to cast by way of arguably logical tradeoffs



And that uryloms, a species Grace was partly a hybrid of, were supposedly NOT from outer space.



Grace, who had not yet learned that casually leaving notes with shocking information was maybe not the best idea, thought she would discuss what she had learned with Mr Verres and Tedd in the evening



Instead, before school that Wednesday morning was a hasty scramble to make sure Mr Verres could explain everything Grace had learned as though it was Mr Verres who had been visited by the Emissary in his dreams.



This was because he had every intention of claiming exactly that.



THE POSSIBILITY THAT SPELLS  
CAN BE PROGRAMMED IS...

HONESTLY TERRIFYING. BUT  
WE CAN'T JUST IGNORE IT IF IT'S  
POSSIBLE IF NOTHING ELSE, WE  
NEED TO KNOW WHAT OTHERS  
MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO

AND  
WE DO  
NEED NEW  
SPELLS  
AND  
WANDS.

"IF" BEING THE  
KEYWORD. TEDD'S  
DOCUMENTATION  
BEFORE HE KNEW  
HE WAS A SEER  
WAS SLOPPY, AND  
AFTER HE FOUND  
OUT HE WAS A  
SEER?

A QUICK NOTE  
ABOUT BEING  
A SEER, THE  
GLOVE BEING  
A "FAILURE",  
AND NOT A  
SINGLE LINE  
OF THE CODE  
HE USED!



SIMPLY CALLING IT A FAILURE IS  
ANTITHETICAL TO BEING A SCIENTIST,  
AND NOT REALIZING WHAT HE HAD  
WITH THAT GLOVE IS JUST... JUST...



UGH. SCRUB  
TRASH, IS ALL  
I'M SAYING.

HM...



TEDD IS VERY  
SCIENCE MINDED,  
BUT ALSO VERY  
SENSITIVE BEING  
THAT MISTAKEN  
ABOUT WHAT THE  
GLOVE DID MIGHT  
HAVE BEEN  
UPSETTING...

IT'S SOMETHING  
TO WORK ON.

IN TEDD'S  
DEFENSE, YOU  
ONLY JUST  
NOTICED HOW  
AMAZING THIS  
BREAKTHROUGH  
IS NOW

YEAH, I'M GOING TO  
LEVEL WITH YOU ARTHUR.  
I DIDN'T READ TEDD'S  
NOTES BEFORE TONIGHT



WHAT?! BUT I TOLD  
YOU TO ASSESS TEDD'S  
COMPETENCE!

I WAS BUSY, TEDD'S THE ONLY  
OTHER SEER WE KNOW OF IN  
AMERICA, AND HE'S THE SON  
OF EDWARD VERRES.



WAS THERE  
ANY CHANCE HE  
WASN'T GOING TO  
GET THE LAB?

THE HIGHER UPS  
MIGHT NOT HAVE  
SIGNED OFF ON IT?



THAT'S WHAT  
I THOUGHT







TO BE CLEAR I THINK THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE NOT GETTING THIS LAB IS IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ARTHUR SHUTS IT DOWN, AND I DON'T THINK WE'D BE HERE IF THAT WERE LIKELY

I JUST THINK MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION BY BEING PROFESSIONAL COULD HELP OPEN UP EVEN MORE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES.

YEAH I GET IT

I THOUGHT EDWARD HAD A SON.

I'M COMPLICATED. CAN WE FOCUS?

I ALSO DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK YOU *HAVE* TO ACCEPT THE LAB.

WHAT? WHY WOULDN'T I?

WE HAVEN'T HEARD THE DETAILS YET WHAT EXACTLY YOU'D BE EXPECTED TO DO, HOW MUCH YOU'D NEED TO DO EVERY WEEK ON TOP OF YOUR COLLEGE CLASSES...

I JUST DON'T WANT YOU TO FEEL LIKE YOU *HAVE* TO SAY YES.

I'LL BE PROUD OF YOU NO MATTER WHAT YOU DECIDE

ARE YOU WORRIED THEY'LL WANT ME TO DO THINGS I WON'T BE OKAY WITH?

NO. NOT REALLY I IMAGINE ARTHUR WILL WANT TO KEEP YOU HAPPY.

HE ALSO WON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD GET ME KICKING DOWN HIS DOOR.

BUT IF HE *DIDN'T* CARE ABOUT THOSE THINGS. ?

ARTHUR. IS SOMEONE  
WITH A STRONG SENSE OF  
RIGHT AND WRONG...

...AND BELIEVES IN THE NEEDS  
OF THE MANY OUTWEIGHING  
THE NEEDS OF THE FEW

WHICH SOUNDS  
GOOD, BUT WE'VE  
NEVER AGREED ON  
HOW MUCH WE  
SHOULD BE WILLING  
TO DO TO HELP  
"THE FEW"

THERE ARE PLENTY OF  
PEOPLE I'VE HELPED WHO HE  
WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED.

THINGS HE  
HAS DONE.  
OR NOT  
DONE I  
WOULD NOT  
BE WILLING  
TO DO, OR  
NOT DO.

HE IS... "A  
MONSTER IN  
SERVICE OF  
THE GREATER  
GOOD"

YOU THINK  
HE'S A  
MONSTER?

NO. HE  
DOES.

HE CALLS  
HIMSELF A  
MONSTER.

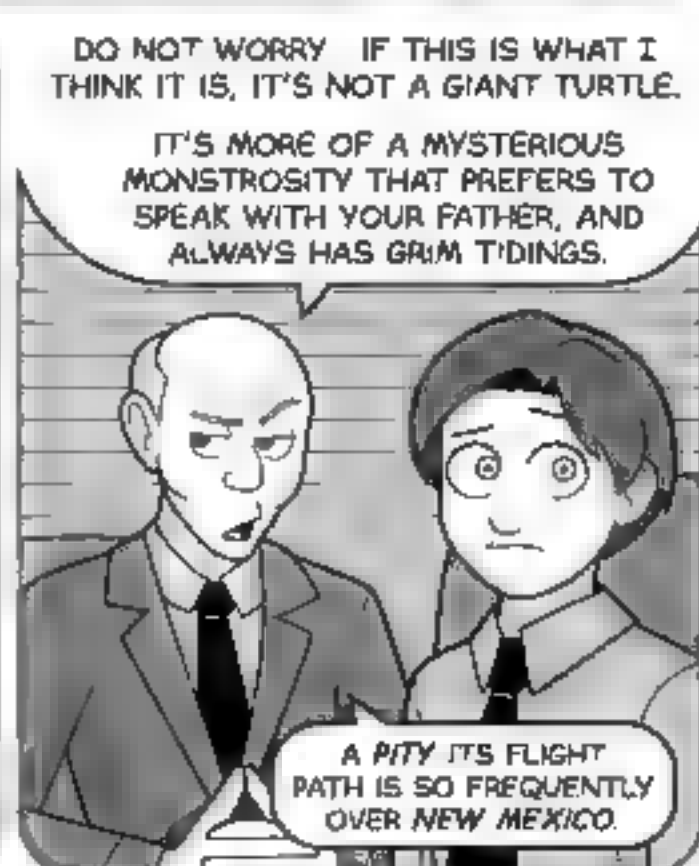
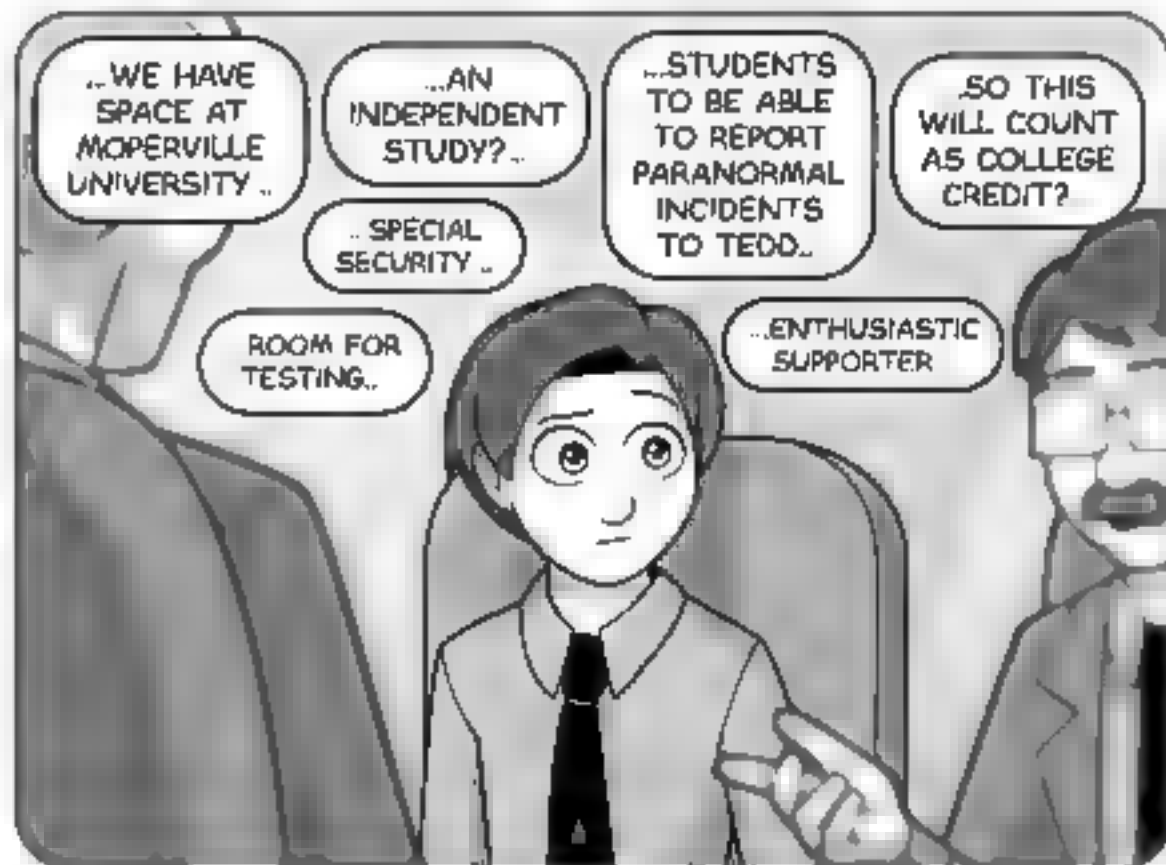
ALONG WITH  
SEVERAL OTHER  
THINGS IF HE'S  
BEEN DRINKING.

BUT LIKE I  
SAID, HE'S  
GOING TO WANT  
TO KEEP BOTH  
OF US HAPPY

WITH THE WAY THINGS  
ARE CHANGING WITH  
MAGIC. I DON'T THINK  
YOU NEED TO WORRY  
ABOUT ANY OF THAT

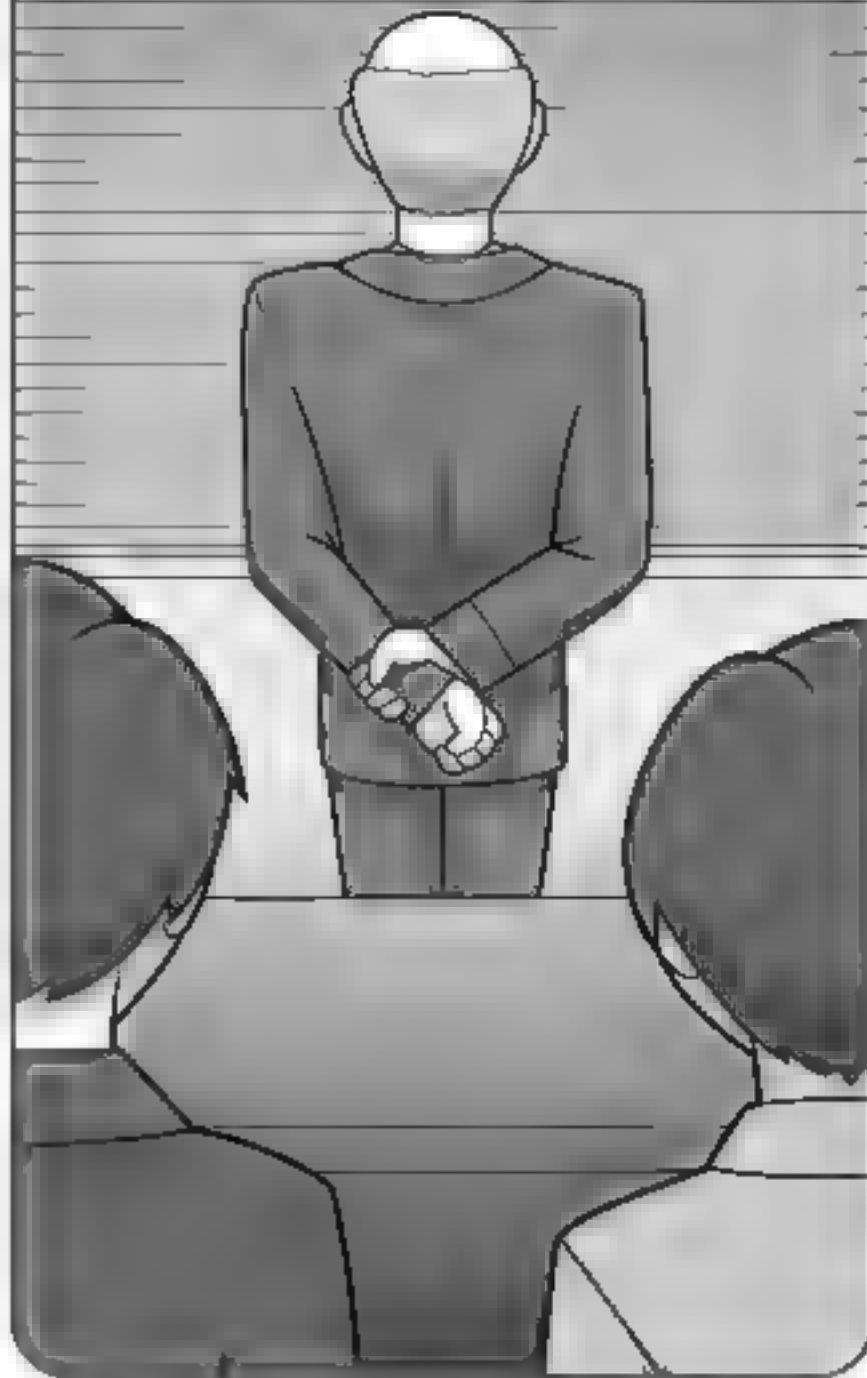
THAT SAID, KEEP YOUR  
EYES OPEN AND DON'T TAKE  
TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED,  
BUT IT SHOULD BE FINE TO  
ACCEPT A LAB FROM HIM.

HE'S LIKELY  
GOING BACK INTO  
RETIREMENT  
SOON, ANYWAY



MY APOLOGIES FOR MAKING  
THE TWO OF YOU WAIT

I WAS ON THE PHONE WITH A V.I.P.  
WHO TOOK HINTS THAT I NEEDED TO  
GO AS INVITATIONS TO KEEP TALKING.



BELIEVE ME I  
UNDERSTAND.

THE FREQUENCY WITH  
WHICH I'VE HAD TO  
DEAL WITH THAT HAS  
ONLY INCREASED SINCE  
I HAD YOUR JOB.



IT IS  
GOOD TO  
SEE YOU  
AGAIN,  
TEDD.



EH?



AH, YES!  
HELLO!

GOOD TO  
SEE YOU  
TOO!



PLEASE HAVE A SEAT



I'M NOT... A  
HUNDRED PERCENT  
CLEAR ON WHAT MY  
DAD DOES NOW.



WHEN IT COMES TO  
EXTRATERRESTRIAL,  
MAGICAL, AND/OR  
INTERDIMENSIONAL  
BEINGS, YOUR FATHER  
IS AN UNPARALLELED  
DIPLOMAT



WE'D BE ON FAR  
WORSE TERMS WITH  
MANY SUCH BEINGS  
IF NOT FOR HIM.  
IT'S THE PRIMARY  
REASON WHY YOUR  
FATHER HAS SO  
MANY POWERFUL  
ALLIES.

HE HAS A TALENT FOR NEGOTIATING  
WITH, AND UNDERSTANDING, BEINGS  
WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM HIMSELF



OH THE IRONY

HM?

UH...  
NOTHING.  
JUST...

IT WAS  
NOTHING.



YOU WERE  
NERVOUS ABOUT  
ME SEEING YOU IN  
YOUR PRESENT  
FORM.



UH...



AND YOU DIDN'T  
SAY ANYTHING ABOUT  
IT TO YOUR FATHER.



YOU WERE LESS  
CONCERNED WITH HOW  
I'D REACT, AND MORE  
WORRIED I'D SAY SOME  
THING IN FRONT OF  
HIM, WEREN'T YOU.





I WON'T PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND  
WHAT YOU'RE FEELING.

..BUT YOUR  
FATHER IS  
ONE OF  
THE MOST  
ACCEPTING  
PEOPLE I  
HAVE EVER  
KNOWN.

I'M SURE HE WOULD—

HE'S ALREADY  
SEEN ME AS  
A GIRL.

HE LOOKS AT ME WITH A  
MIX OF D.SAPPOINTMENT  
AND WORRY

HE SAYS  
"IT CAN'T BE  
HEALTHY "

I D DNT  
WANT TH.S  
MEETING TO  
BE... ABOUT  
THAT

HAVE YOU  
TOLD HIM HOW  
YOU FEEL?

EXPLAINED  
WHY

I DON'T KNOW  
WHY! SOMETIMES  
I FEEL LIKE A  
GIRL! SOMETIMES  
A GUY!

I DON'T KNOW  
WHY I FEEL THAT  
WAY! I JUST DO!  
ALWAYS HAVE!

HOW DO YOU  
EXPLAIN SOMETHING  
AS NATURAL AND  
AUTOMATIC TO YOU  
AS BREATHING?!

PERHAPS,  
YOU JUST  
DID.

I CAN'T  
REMEMBER  
NOT FEELING  
THIS WAY!



I DO NOT DOUBT ANYTHING YOU HAVE SAID. AND I WOULD NOT SAY WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY IF I DID NOT HAVE SUCH A LONG HISTORY WITH YOUR FATHER.



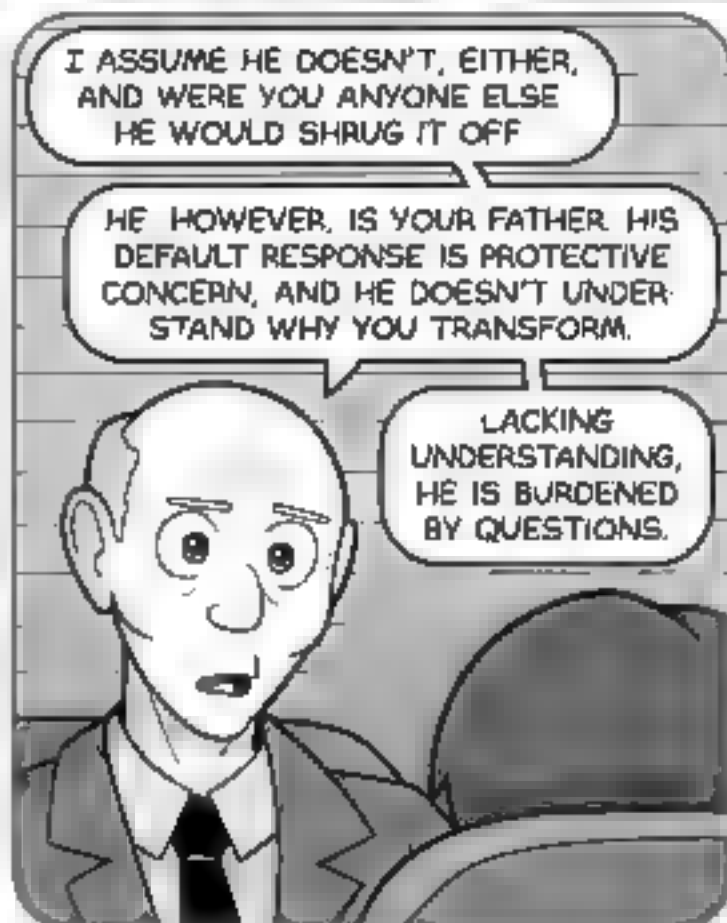
IT'S POSSIBLE HE HAS A BLIND SPOT I AM UNAWARE OF BUT I WOULD BE ASTONISHED IF YOUR FATHER'S ATTITUDE CAME FROM A PLACE OF BIGOTRY

WHERE I CAN EASILY SEE IT COMING FROM IS IGNORANCE, CONFUSION...

...AND BEING YOUR FATHER



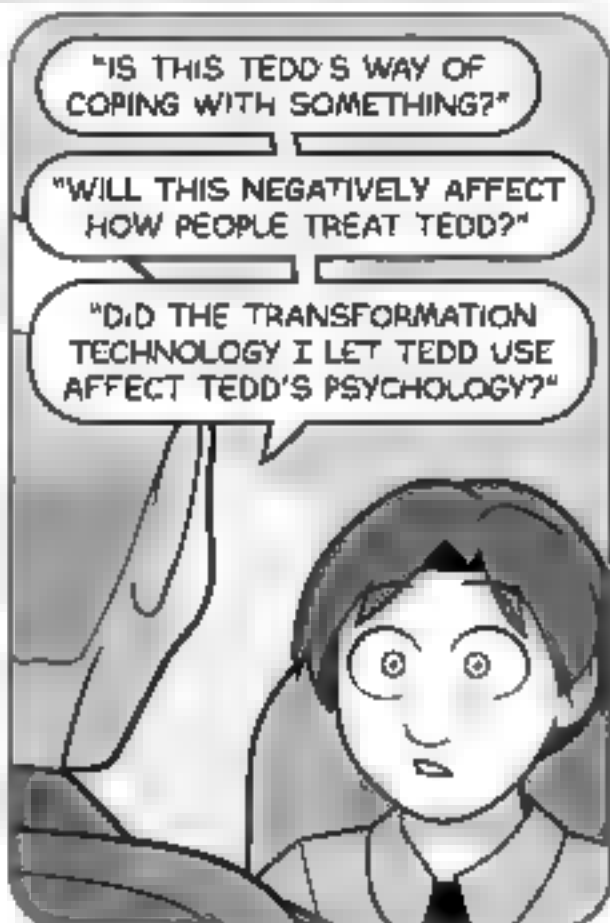
I... DON'T UNDERSTAND.



I ASSUME HE DOESN'T, EITHER, AND WERE YOU ANYONE ELSE HE WOULD SHRUG IT OFF

HE HOWEVER, IS YOUR FATHER. HIS DEFAULT RESPONSE IS PROTECTIVE CONCERN, AND HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU TRANSFORM.

LACKING UNDERSTANDING, HE IS BURDENED BY QUESTIONS.



"IS THIS TEDD'S WAY OF COPING WITH SOMETHING?"

"WILL THIS NEGATIVELY AFFECT HOW PEOPLE TREAT TEDD?"

"DID THE TRANSFORMATION TECHNOLOGY I LET TEDD USE AFFECT TEDD'S PSYCHOLOGY?"



IT DIDN'T—I'VE FELT THIS WAY FOREVER! IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT!

I DO NOT THINK HE KNOWS THAT



I'M NOT SAYING YOU DID ANYTHING WRONG

IT SOUNDS LIKE HE APPROACHED THIS IN AN UPSETTING WAY THAT MADE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE

YOU'VE MADE CLEAR THAT THIS IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN, AND FRANKLY YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT



NONETHELESS, I THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FATHER WOULD IMPROVE IF YOU TWO WERE TO TALK ABOUT THIS.



I'M... NOT SURE I CAN.



IF YOU'D LIKE, I COULD TALK TO YOUR FATHER FOR YOU

N-NO!

THAT'S NOT...

I MEAN.



MAYBE I'LL TALK TO HIM EVENTUALLY...

BUT IT NEEDS TO BE ME SAYING STUFF, Y'KNOW?



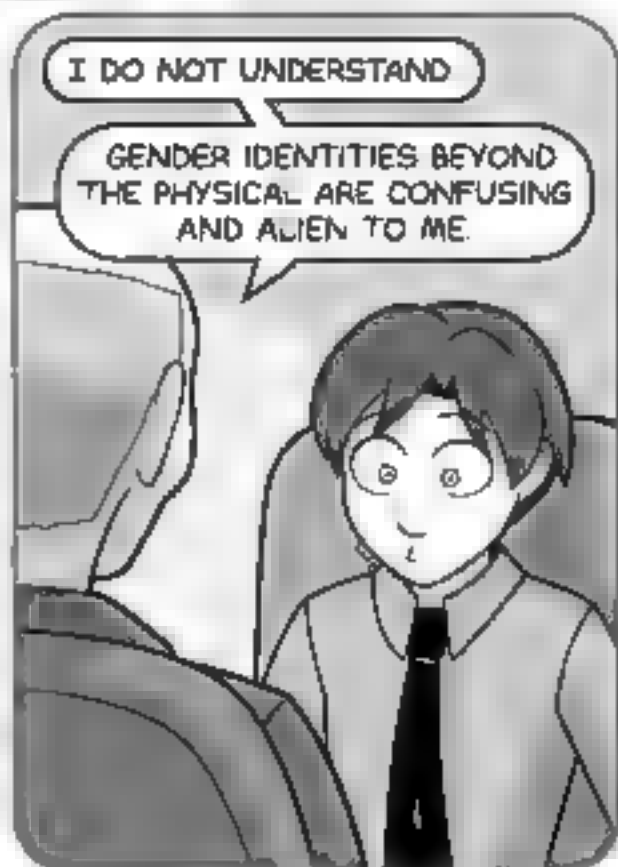
PERHAPS IT SHOULD BE

MY OFFER REMAINS OPEN.



UH, THANK YOU, I...

IT'S NICE TO KNOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND, AT LEAST



I DO NOT UNDERSTAND

GENDER IDENTITIES BEYOND THE PHYSICAL ARE CONFUSING AND ALIEN TO ME.



WHAT? BUT... I MEAN YOU JUST.

THE ONLY QUESTION YOU EVEN ASKED WAS WHEN YOU FIRST REALIZED WHO I WAS!

YOU'VE DONE NOTHING BUT BE ACCEPTING SINCE THEN!



OF COURSE I HAVE!  
BECAUSE **THIS.. IS AMERICA**



EH?

THE IDEAL AMERICA ASPIRES TO IS

# FREEDOM!

A NATION FULL OF PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. *EACH* WITH OUR OWN BELIEFS, HOPES, AND DREAMS!

WE ARE *NEVER* ALL GOING TO PERFECTLY UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER!

FOR AMERICA TO *TRULY* BE THE LAND OF THE FREE, WHERE PEOPLE CAN LIVE AS THEIR *TRUE SELVES*, WE *MUST* HAVE PEOPLE WILLING TO ACCEPT EACH OTHER *WITHOUT* UNDERSTANDING!



UNDERSTANDING BEING A *REQUIREMENT* FOR ACCEPTANCE IS *ANTITHETICAL* TO THE AMERICAN DREAM, AND *INTOLERANCE* IS WHY WE HAVE *NOT YET ACHIEVED* THAT DREAM!

AS A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, ANY THING LESS THAN *UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE* OF OUR DIFFERENCES WOULD BE TO *BETRAY AMERICA!*



PLEASE NOTE THAT I'M TALKING ABOUT ACCEPTING PERSONAL DIFFERENCES, NOT BEHAVIOR THAT IS ACTIVELY HARMFUL TO OTHERS.

NOR AM I SAYING WE SHOULD ACCEPT INTOLERANCE. I AM SPECIFICALLY AGAINST INTOLERANCE



I GOT THAT, YEAH.



AH. GOOD YOU HAD A LOOK ON YOUR FACE, AND I'VE ENCOUNTERED THAT CONFUSION BEFORE

N-NO, IT'S JUST... A LOT TO TAKE IN, AND UM... I DON'T MEAN TO OFFEND BUT...



BUT?

I MIGHT HAVE HEARD SOMEWHERE THAT YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS. UM... A MONSTER?

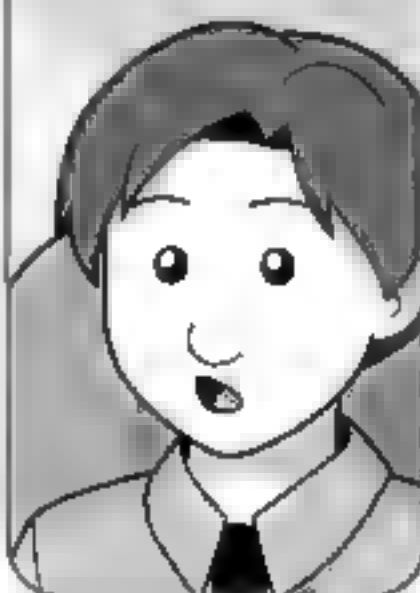


YOU HEARD THAT "SOMEWHERE"



YES.

SOMEWHERE.



BUT YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE A MONSTER TO ME

YOU SEEM, UM...



NICE?

THAT IS KIND OF YOU TO SAY, TEDD.

BUT I AM IN THE BUSINESS OF HIDING TRUTHS FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. DENYING MAGIC USERS THE R FREEDOM, AND WORKING FROM THE SHADOWS. HIDDEN AWAY FROM THE PROPER PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY OF A FREE COUNTRY



IT HAS BEEN A VERY NECESSARY EVIL, BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE



I AM A MONSTER.



IF THOSE THINGS GO AGAINST WHAT YOU BELIEVE, THEN WHY...



THERE ARE THINGS THAT, IF ALLOWED WOULD CREATE A NET-LOSS IN FREEDOM.



THINGS THAT WOULD ENDANGER THE RIGHTS, FREEDOM, AND SAFETY OF OTHERS.

I, FOR **EXAMPLE** BELIEVE IN THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS.

IF, HOWEVER, A PERSON WERE ALLOWED TO HAVE **INTERCONTINENTAL MISSILES** IN THEIR BACKYARD, JUST THOSE **BEING THERE** WOULD BE A THREAT TO EVERYONE'S SAFETY



NOW, AS YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED, THAT **EXAMPLE** WAS **RIDICULOUS**. ANYONE GETTING SUCH WEAPONS IS IMPROBABLE TO THE POINT OF EFFECTIVELY BEING **IMPOSSIBLE**

WE CAN PREVENT PEOPLE FROM GETTING THEM, OR THE PARTS FOR MAKING THEM.

EVEN IF WE **DIDN'T** PREVENT IT, IT WOULD BE **VERY OBVIOUS** THEY HAD THEM.

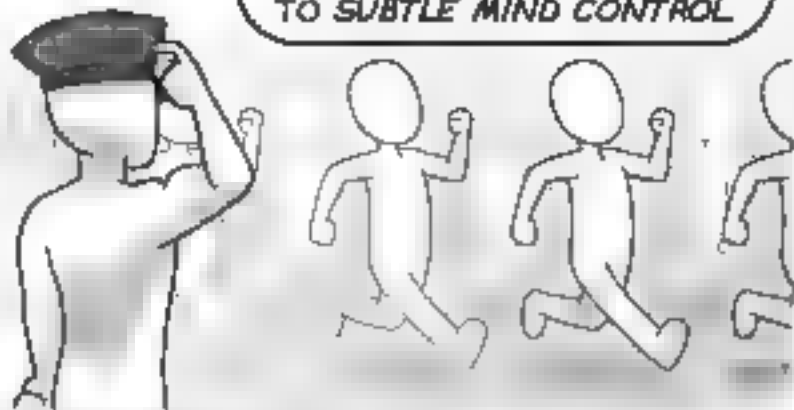


MAGIC IS DIFFERENT. A SINGLE PERSON WITH DANGEROUS MAGIC HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ENDANGER THE RIGHTS, FREEDOM, AND SAFETY OF **COUNTLESS** OTHERS.

WHAT'S MORE WHO HAS IT WON'T NECESSARILY BE OBVIOUS. NOR WILL THE DAMAGE THEY CAUSE.

???

THE POTENTIAL IS ANYTHING FROM **MASSIVE EXPLOSIONS** TO **SUBTLE MIND CONTROL**



IF SOMEONE KNOWS ONE OF SEVERAL WAYS TO ACQUIRE MAGIC ON THEIR OWN, THERE'S **NOTHING** WE CAN DO TO STOP THEM.

BY THE TIME WE'RE EVEN AWARE OF IT, SOMETHING BIG ENOUGH FOR US TO NOTICE HAS HAPPENED.



THE ONLY PREVENTATIVE MEASURE WE'VE EVER HAD HAS BEEN TO **HIDE** HOW TO ACQUIRE MAGIC POWER.

AND SO. TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS, FREEDOM, AND SAFETY OF **MILLIONS** OF PEOPLE, WE KEEP SECRETS.

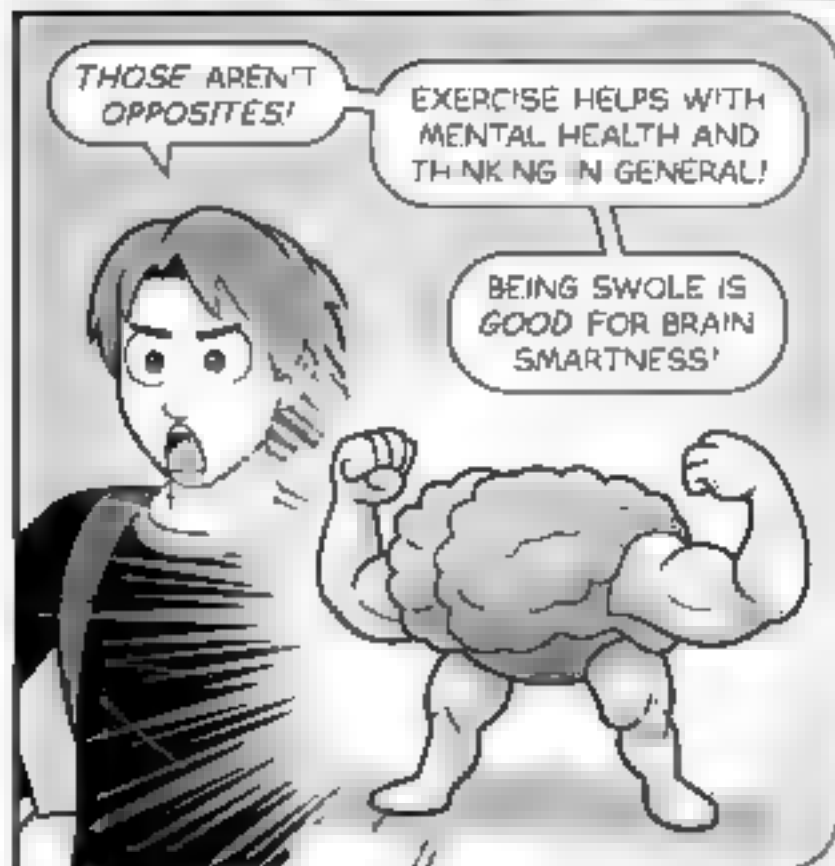
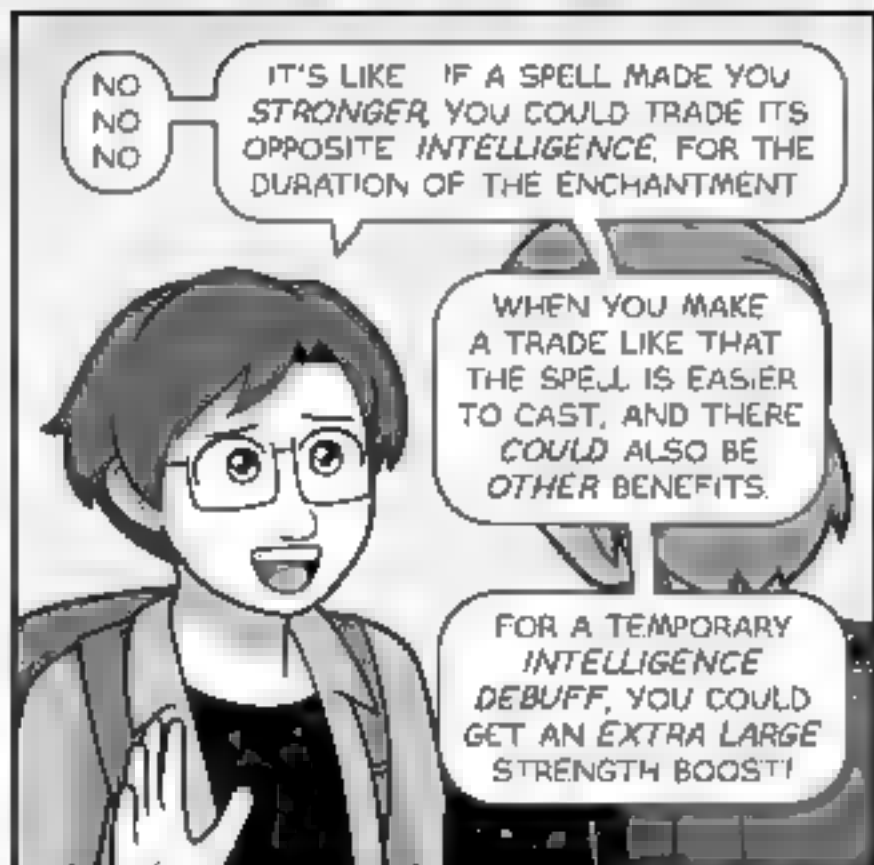
WORK FROM THE SHADOWS.

LIMIT THE RIGHTS OF A SMALL NUMBER OF MAGIC USERS.

IT IS A NET POSITIVE FOR EVERYTHING I BELIEVE IN.



BUT I AM A MONSTER FOR DOING IT



KNOWING ABOUT THE "DUMB STRONG GUY" CHARACTER TROPE *MIGHT* BE ENOUGH TO TRADE INTELLIGENCE FOR BEEFIER STRENGTH SPELLS?

IT'S *POSSIBLE* THE TRADE JUST HAS TO MAKE *SOME* SENSE TO THE PERSON USING THE SPELL



LESS "I COMPLETELY BELIEVE THIS MAKES LOGICAL SENSE" AND MORE "I CAN SEE A CONNECTION"?

I ACTUALLY THINK THAT'S MORE LIKELY GIVEN HOW MAGIC IS

BESIDES, IF IT *WASN'T*, ANYONE WITH ANY SENSE WOULD JUST LOGIC THEMSELVES OUT OF MAKING MOST OF THOSE TRADES.



HUH. SO... IF I THOUGHT OF SOMETHING FITTING TO TRADE WHILE BECOMING *CHEERLEADER*, I COULD MAKE IT MORE POWERFUL IN TIME FOR SATURDAY?

OR IS *THAT* WHAT THE "SHRINK AND LIMIT STRENGTH TO ONE FOR MORE POINTS" THING IS?

NO THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING ELSE. THE MAGIC GUY SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IT

BUT HE *ALSO* WARNED AGAINST USING IT



WHAT? WHY?

CHARISMA	2 ... 4!
AWARENESS	2 ... 4!
TECH	2 ... 4!
STRENGTH	2 ... 4!
FLIGHT	2 ... 4!
ENDURANCE	2 ... 4!
RESISTANCE	2 ... 4!

**TOTAL** 14 ... 28

↓  
+2

HE COULDN'T SAY! EXPLAINING IT WOULD'VE BEEN LIKE INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO DO IT!



OKAY, WELL *THAT* GUY IS BAD AT HIS JOB BECAUSE *KNOWING* THERE'S A WAY TO BOOST CHEERLEADER'S POWER MEANS I'M *STUCK THINKING ABOUT IT!*



HE *COULD'VE* JUST SAID IT WAS JUST THE SIZE-TRADE THING. BUT *NOOOO*, MY *BRAIN'S* ALL TRYING TO FIGURE THIS OUT AND.



AND I THINK I JUST DID



THE TRADE IS TURNING THE HERO FORM INTO A VILLAIN FORM.



WHAT? MORE POWER FROM A VILLAIN FORM DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!

IT MAKES SENSE TO ME!

WELL, STOP MAKING SENSE OF IT, THEN!



I CAN'T! HEROES GIVING IN TO EVIL FOR POWER IS A WHOLE THING, AND THE ENTIRE REASON I EVEN HAVE THAT FORM IS BECAUSE OF HOW I THINK ABOUT HEROES RIGHT?

AND A MAGIC MAN IS WARNING NOT TO DO IT? I CAN'T NOT MAKE SENSE OF IT!

SO BAD AT HIS JOB!



OKAY BUT WHAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE IS HOW THAT WOULD EVEN WORK

LIKE, THERE'S NO WAY IT WOULD JUST BE A COSMETIC CHANGE

AND YOU DO HAVE SECRET IDENTITY FORMS THAT AFFECT YOUR BEHAVIOR, BUT YOU CAN STILL ACT NORMALLY WHILE USING THOSE WITH JUST A LITTLE BIT OF EFFORT

THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE MUCH OF A COST FOR A POWER BOOST OR SOME THING TO WARN SO STRONGLY AGAINST



MY GUT SAYS IT WOULDN'T BE LIKE THAT

HM. I'D LIKE TO SAY GUT FEELINGS ARE IRRELEVANT (SCIENCE AND ALL THAT) BUT I'M NOT SURE I CAN. WITH A PERSONAL SPELL, YOUR HAVING INTUITION ABOUT IT ISN'T OUT OF THE QUESTION.



I MEAN I'M NOT SURE BUT

I DON'T SEE MYSELF SUDDENLY GOING "MWUH-HA HA" AND BEING A CARTOONISH BAD GUY

BUT I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING TO THIS



**BRRRHHHNNNG!**

ANNND WE NEED TO GET TO FIRST PERIOD.

MWUH-HA HA HA! TARDINESS! THE GREATEST OF EVIL!

WE NEED NEW WANDS, AND NEW SPELLS.

WE MUST BE ABLE TO INCAPACITATE PEOPLE WITHOUT HURTING THEM, AND TO TAKE DOWN MORE DANGEROUS TARGETS WITHOUT ALSO CAUSING COLLATERAL DAMAGE



UNTIL THEN, OUR AGENTS ARE RUNNING AROUND WITH THEIR OWN SPELLS...

...AND GUNS.

THAT'S A RECIPE FOR TRAGEDY

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT MAKING NEW SAFE SPELLS QUICKLY NOT WITHOUT A LOT OF DANGEROUS TESTING.



TEDD COULD PROBABLY HELP, BUT THEN TEDD WOULD BE EXPOSED TO DANGEROUS AND VIOLENT SPELLS.

TEDD MIGHT ALSO BE UNCOMFORTABLE HELPING US MAKE WEAPONS, OR OUTRIGHT OBJECT TO IT, JEOPARDIZING OUR LONG-TERM GOALS.

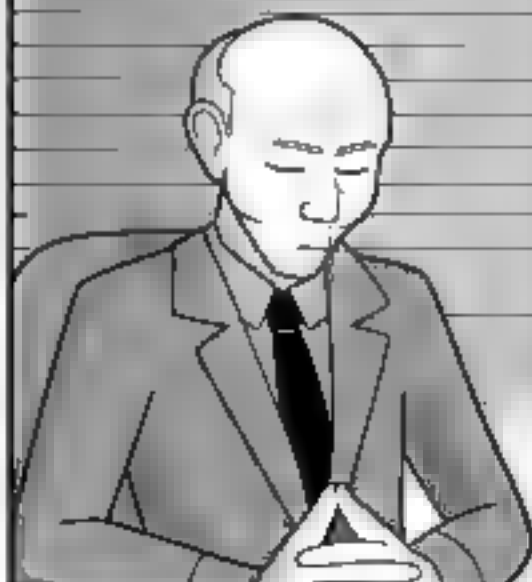
TEDD MUST BE KEPT *HAPPY* AND *SAFE*



THEIR POORLY DOCUMENTED INVENTION, HOWEVER, COULD MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

THE POTENTIAL PRECISION GAINED FROM BEING ABLE TO *PROGRAM* SPELLS COULD BE A GAME CHANGER

DOCTOR GERMAHN NEEDS TEDD'S CODE, AND ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TEDD HAS. BUT



SIGH



HELLO, DOCTOR GERMAHN.

I NEED YOUR FULL ANALYSIS OF TEDD'S NOTES.





Shortly after school ..



AS EXPECTED  
OUR HEAD  
SCIENTIST  
FOUND A LOT  
TO CRITICIZE IN  
YOUR NOTES.

WE'RE ALL AWARE HOW  
EVER, THAT YOU DON'T HAVE  
ADVANCED TRAINING YET  
AND YOU NEVER INTENDED  
THESE NOTES FOR ANYONE  
BUT YOURSELF

SO DON'T  
TAKE THIS  
TOO  
HARSHLY

OF  
COURSE

THE  
AGONY...!

WITH ALLOWANCES MADE  
FOR THOSE FACTORS, HE  
SAID MOST OF YOUR NOTES  
WERE DECENTLY DONE

HE IS A RATHER STRICT  
PERSON, SO THIS IS  
ACTUALLY HIGH PRAISE

SO,  
UM,  
THAT'S  
GOOD?

IT IS IN ORDER TO TRULY  
ASSESS WHERE YOU NEED  
IMPROVEMENT, HOWEVER

WE NEED EXAMPLES  
OF YOUR NOTES WRITTEN  
WITH OTHER PEOPLE  
READING THEM IN MIND

SPECIFICALLY WE WOULD LIKE YOU  
TO REVISIT THE EXPERIMENT WITH  
THE NOTES OUR HEAD SCIENTIST  
WAS MOST CRITICAL OF

THE ENCHANTMENT GLOVE

OH

THAT

IS THERE  
AN ISSUE  
WITH THAT  
OPTION?

IT'S JUST... I THOUGHT  
THAT GLOVE WAS HOW I  
COULD ENCHANT  
THINGS.

AND THEN I  
FOUND OUT IT  
JUST MADE IT  
A LITTLE EASIER  
TO CREATE NEW  
SPELLS.

I WAS... REALLY PROUD  
OF THAT GLOVE BEFORE I  
FOUND THAT OUT, AND I  
FIGURED I WOULDN'T GET  
BETTER AT ENCHANTING  
IF I RELIED ON IT SO.

I HAVEN'T DONE  
ANYTHING WITH  
IT SINCE THEN.

ALSO, THERE  
WAS BARELY ANY  
TIME BETWEEN  
LEARNING I WAS  
A SEER, AND  
GIVING YOU  
MY NOTES?



LIKE, BEST  
CASE SCENARIO,  
I WOULD HAVE  
WRITTEN "TO BE  
CONTINUED" IN  
MY NOTES.

AH I BELIEVE I UNDERSTAND  
WHAT PERSPECTIVE YOU WERE  
SEEING THIS FROM NOW

EH?

IT PROBABLY WON'T SURPRISE  
YOU TO LEARN, TEDD, THAT  
OUR GOVERNMENT HAS WAYS  
OF MAKING WANDS OTHER  
THAN GETTING ME TO DO IT

I NEVER GAVE IT  
MUCH THOUGHT  
I JUST ASSUMED  
THERE WAS SOME  
SECRET WAY TO  
MAKE WANDS.

THE GLOVE WAS  
JUST AN IDEA I  
HAD FOR HOW I  
COULD DO IT

WELL, THE SECRET  
ISN'T EXCITING IT'S  
ALL JUST WANDS  
MAKING MORE WANDS,  
AND THEY REQUIRE  
EXPERIENCED MAGIC  
USERS TO BE USED  
PROPERLY

SOME NON-SEER  
WIZARDS WE'RE AWARE  
OF HAVE BEEN ABLE  
TO CREATE WANDS  
WITHOUT A TOOL BUT  
IT'S A RESULT OF  
SPELLS THEY'VE  
LEARNED, NOT AN  
INNATE ABILITY AND  
IT'S MORE LIMITED

WE HAVE  
NOTHING AS  
PRECISE AND  
FOOLPROOF AS  
PROGRAMMABLE  
SPELLS.

REALLY? I MEAN, THE GLOVE WAS SPECIAL  
TO ME BECAUSE I THOUGHT I'D FIGURED  
OUT A BUNCH OF STUFF ON MY OWN, BUT  
I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS ANYTHING NEW

ALL I DID WAS  
STUDY URYUUM  
TECHNOLOGY,  
AND MAKE SOME  
THING SIMILAR  
FOR HUMAN  
MAGIC

I GUESS A LOT  
OF IT DID HAVE  
TO BE DONE  
FROM SCRATCH  
FOR VARIOUS  
REASONS, BUT

YOU OVERESTIMATE US,  
AND UNDERESTIMATE  
YOURSELF YOU HAVE  
SUCCEEDED WHERE  
OTHERS HAVE FAILED

MAYBE IT'S  
JUST BEEN A  
WHILE SINCE  
THEY TRIED?  
COMPUTERS  
HAVE COME A  
LONG WAY.

STOP THAT  
MY POINT  
TEDD, IS WE  
DIDN'T JUST  
CHOOSE THE  
ENCHANT  
MENT GLOVE  
BECAUSE ITS  
NOTES NEED  
IMPROVEMENT

WE CHOSE IT  
BECAUSE IT HAS  
SIGNIFICANT  
POTENTIAL

THE WAY THINGS ARE  
GOING, WANDS MIGHT  
BECOME COMMON,  
EVERYDAY ITEMS IN  
THE FUTURE

THE WORLD IS GOING TO  
NEED SOMETHING LIKE YOUR  
ENCHANTMENT GLOVE

WOW UM. YES I CAN DEFINITELY REVISIT THE GLOVE THEN.



VERY GOOD. IN THE MEANTIME WE NEED A COPY OF THE CODE

WE NEED TO ASSESS YOUR CODING. BUT MOSTLY, OUR HEAD SCIENTIST IS EAGER TO SEE MORE OF HOW YOU DID THIS.



OH. UH...

FEAR NOT YOUR NAME WILL BE ON ANY APPLICABLE PATENTS THAT RESULT FROM YOUR WORK NATURALLY. THEY'LL BE CLASSIFIED UNTIL MAGIC IS PUBLIC BUT THE LAST THING WE WANT TO DO IS DISCOURAGE YOU FROM WORKING WITH US



PATENTS?

I MEAN, YES! GOOD! VERY GOOD.

ALSO, UH. WILL I BE JUDGED HARSHLY FOR MY CHOICES IN VARIABLE NAMES?



I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.

IS THIS ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL NAME PREFERENCES?

WHAT? NO, IT'S... YOU KNOW WHAT? IT'S FINE.

ANY EXPERIENCED PROGRAMMER HAS SEEN OR USED WORSE.



I REMAIN CONFUSED. BUT WILL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT

OKAY, GOOD. ...ALSO I NEED TO "LOOK" AT A WAND-MAKING SPELL

WHY DO YOU NEED THAT? YOU'RE A SEER



EXACTLY RIGHT NOW, THE GLOVE JUST MAKES CUSTOM SPELLS EASIER FOR SEERS.

FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, THAT'S BASICALLY YOU, ME, AND THAT ENGLISH KID



IF I'M GOING TO DO THIS PROPERLY, THE GLOVE NEEDS TO WORK WITHOUT A SEER.

IF I LEARN A WAND-MAKING SPELL, I CAN USE THE WAND-MAKING SPELL AS A BASIS FOR A PROGRAMMABLE WAND-MAKING SPELL FOR THE WAND-MAKING GLOVE SO THAT THE WAND-MAKING GLOVE CAN DO ACTUAL WAND-MAKING EQUAL TO OR GREATER THAN THE WAND-MAKING CAPABILITIES OF THE FIRST WAND-MAKING SPELL.



SHOCKINGLY I BELIEVE I FOLLOWED THAT



I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO GET YOU IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO A WAND-MAKING SPELL BUT I WILL TRY

WE ARE NATURALLY CAUTIOUS WITH WAND-MAKING WANDS THAT CAN CREATE MORE WAND-MAKING WANDS.



IT IS LIKELY MY SUPERIORS WILL WANT TO WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE IN YOUR LAB

WHICH IS ARGUABLY LESS SECURE THAN THE HOME OF EDWARD VERRES, BEING AT A COLLEGE, BUT IT IS A PREDICTABLE STIPULATION. IT'S LIKELY TO MAKE THEM FEEL BETTER ABOUT IT



I GUESS THAT'S NOT SURPRISING...

I'LL SEND YOU THE CODE I ALREADY HAVE, AND FOCUS ON EXPERIMENTS WITH CODING SPELLS FOR NOW, THEN.

VERY GOOD I WILL SEE ABOUT GETTING YOU ACCESS TO A WAND-MAKING SPELL SOONER

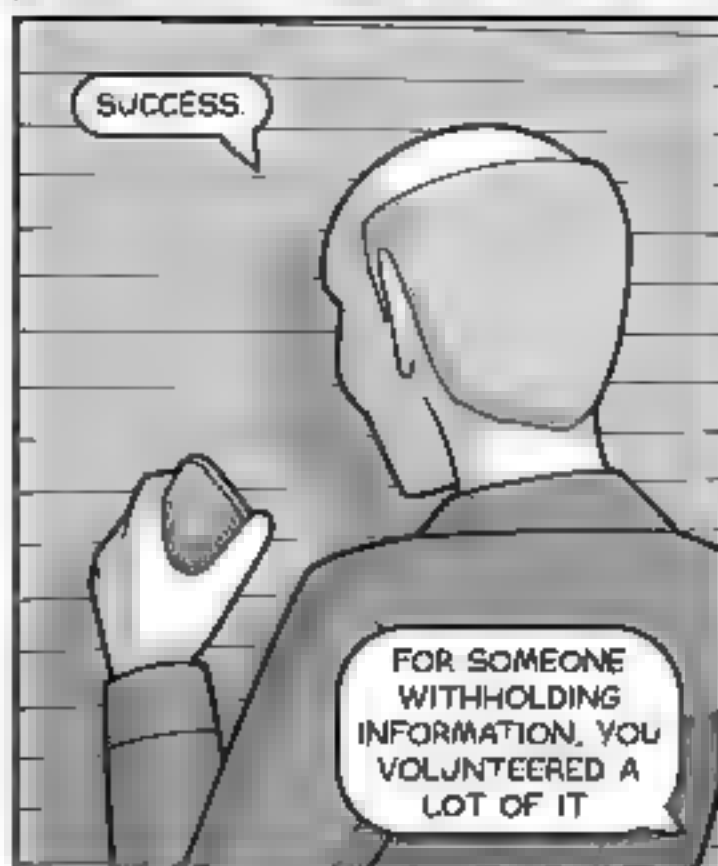


I'D BEST LET YOU GO IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS. YOU CAN CALL ME

I WILL GET IN CONTACT WHEN I GET AN ANSWER ABOUT THE WAND-MAKING SPELL.

OKAY, UH. BYE?

GOODBYE



SUCCESS.

FOR SOMEONE WITHHOLDING INFORMATION, YOU VOLUNTEERED A LOT OF IT



IF IT'S ALREADY CERTAIN SOMEONE WILL LEARN OF SOMETHING, IT IS SOMETIMES BETTER TO VOLUNTEER IT

NOTHING IS LOST, AND TRUST IS GAINED, BY TEDD KNOWING THOSE THINGS.

WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS TO NOT MENTION OUR IMMEDIATE INTENT TO CREATE WEAPONS, AS IT WOULD RISK ALIENATING TEDD





OUR INTENT IS TO CREATE NON-LETHAL WEAPONS IN PLACE OF GUNS.

WOULD TEDD NOT BE PROUD TO ASSIST WITH THAT?



NON-LETHAL IS A MISNOMER. LESS-LETHAL IS MORE ACCURATE

NOT WITH PROPERLY WORKING MAGIC.

MOSTLY, YES, BUT AS WE'VE RECENTLY BEEN REMINDED THERE CAN BE X-FACTORS



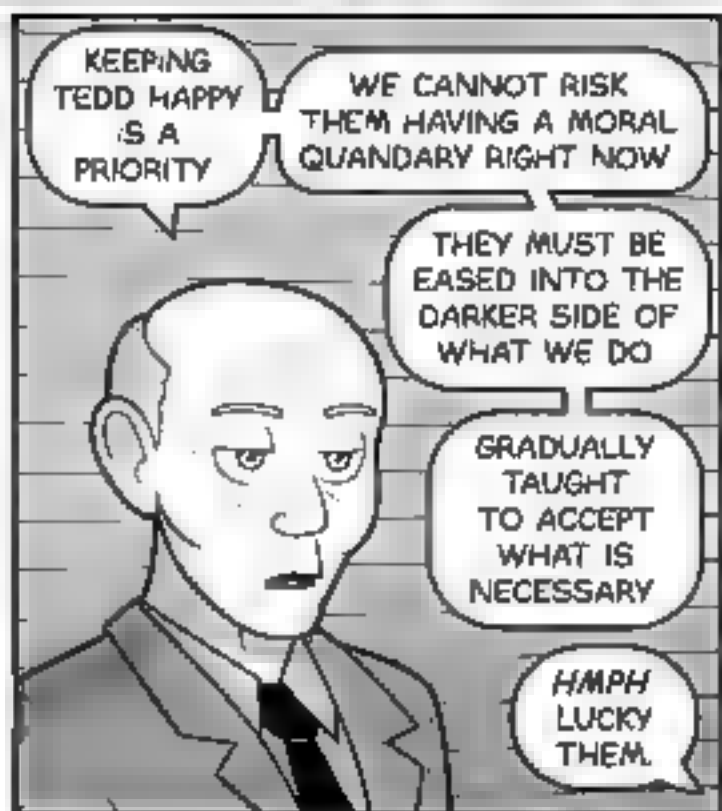
IN ANY CASE THERE IS A CHANCE THAT PEOPLE WILL BE HURT, OR WORSE, IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD USE, OF THESE SPELLS.



WE ALSO NEED SPELLS FOR MORE DANGEROUS TARGETS, AND THERE WON'T BE *ANYTHING* LESS-LETHAL ABOUT *THOSE* SPELLS IF USED ON HUMANS

TEDD IS ONE OF US NOW, BUT THEY ARE NEW, YOUNG, AND SENSITIVE.

WHAT'S MORE, THEY HAVE A RARE TALENT COMBINED WITH IMPRESSIVE SKILLS.



KEEPING TEDD HAPPY IS A PRIORITY

WE CANNOT RISK THEM HAVING A MORAL QUANDARY RIGHT NOW

THEY MUST BE EASED INTO THE DARKER SIDE OF WHAT WE DO

GRADUALLY TAUGHT TO ACCEPT WHAT IS NECESSARY

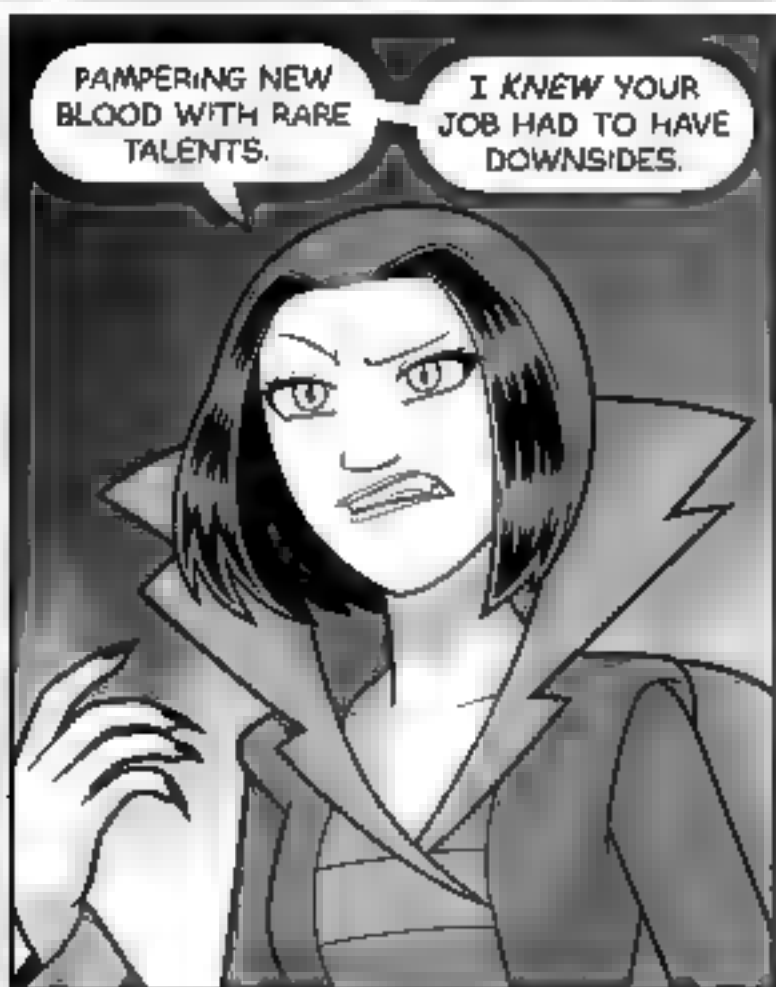
HMPH LUCKY THEM.



YES, GIVEN YOUR INTRODUCTION TO MAGIC, IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE YOU WOULD FIND THAT IRRITATING.

PART OF MY JOB, HOWEVER, IS KNOWING WHAT MY PEOPLE NEED IN ORDER TO FUNCTION AT THEIR BEST

IT IS SOMETHING YOU WILL NEED TO MASTER IF YOU ARE TO HAVE THIS JOB SOMEDAY, BISHOP

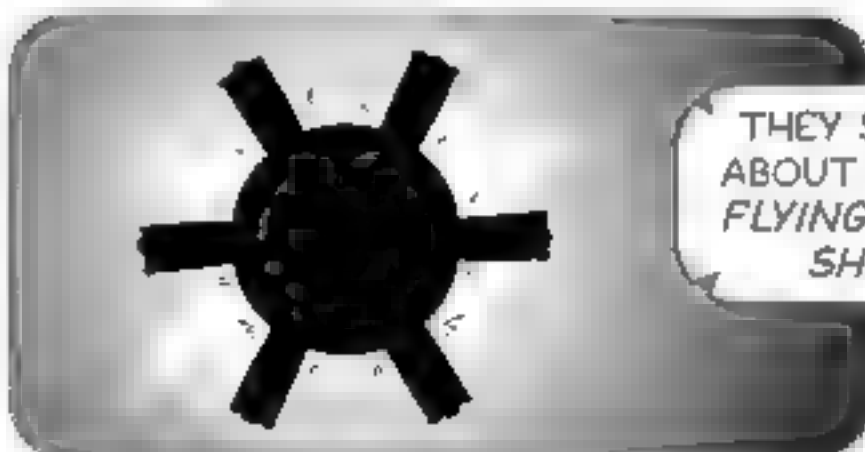


PAMPERING NEW BLOOD WITH RARE TALENTS.

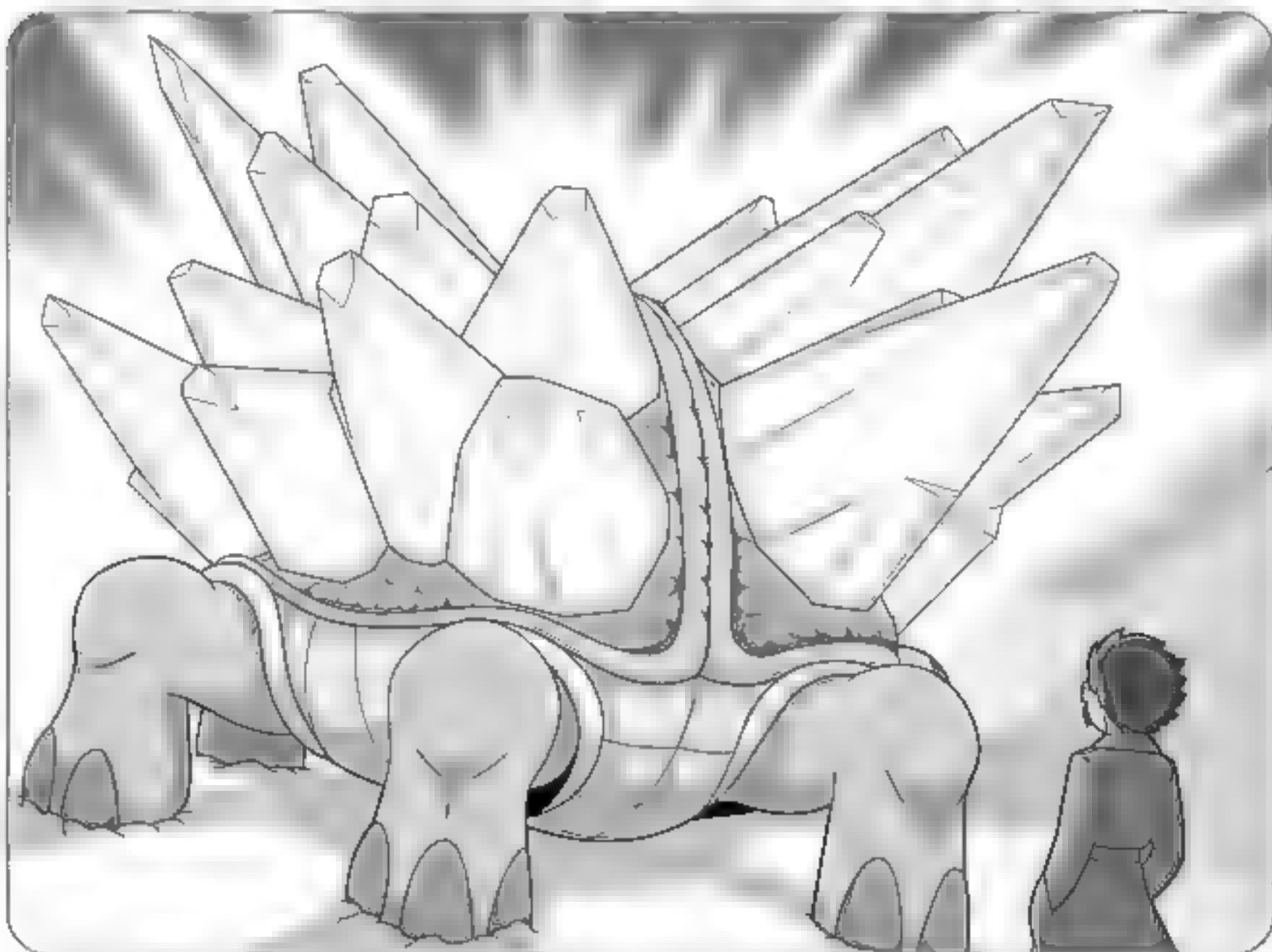
I KNEW YOUR JOB HAD TO HAVE DOWNSIDES.



I APOLOGIZE S R BUT  
THERE IS A PHONE CALL  
FOR MR. VERRES



THEY SAY IT'S  
ABOUT A GIANT  
FLYING TURTLE  
SHELL?







Some time and several antics later...





I SUPPOSE IT  
MAKES SENSE THAT  
MY DAD WOULDN'T  
TRUST ARTHUR.



MY FATHER BELIEVES IN  
HELPING EVERYONE. HE  
WILL GO OUT OF HIS WAY,  
AND TAKE RISKS, TO HELP  
OUT INDIVIDUALS.



ARTHUR BELIEVES IN THE NEEDS  
OF THE MANY OUTWEIGHING THE  
NEEDS OF THE FEW, AND ISN'T  
WILLING TO TAKE AS MANY RISKS  
TO HELP JUST ONE PERSON.



NEITHER IS GOING TO BE RIGHT ALL THE  
TIME, AND NEITHER WILL FULLY TRUST THE  
OTHER TO DO WHAT *HE* THINKS IS RIGHT.

AND YEAH, IF THINGS WERE DIFFERENT?  
ARTHUR WOULD NOT BE A RELIABLE ALLY.  
HE'D THROW US UNDER A BUS IF HE  
THOUGHT IT WAS FOR THE GREATER GOOD.



AS THINGS STAND,  
HOWEVER, MY FATHER  
HOLDS AN IMPORTANT  
POSITION THAT  
ARTHUR RESPECTS...

...AND ARTHUR IS  
DEPENDING ON *ME* TO  
PREPARE FOR WHEN  
HOW TO GET MAGIC  
INEVITABLY BECOMES  
PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE.

I'M NOT EASILY  
REPLACED, EITHER.  
HE CAN'T RISK  
ALIENATING ME.



AND HE REALLY DOES SEEM LIKE A GOOD  
PERSON WHO'S FELT CORNERED INTO DOING  
THINGS HE HATES TO PROTECT PEOPLE!

HIS *BIG DREAM* RIGHT NOW  
IS JUST TO *RETIRE* AGAIN  
WITHOUT LEAVING A MESS!



THERE'S NO REASON  
FOR ME TO NOT TRUST  
HIM RIGHT NOW!

NOT THAT I'M GOING TO  
GAMBLE *GRACE* ON THAT.

IF DAD WANTS TO SAY *HE* HAD  
WEIRD MAGIC DREAMS WITH A  
MAGIC DREAM WIZARD, GO DAD.





WITHOUT KNOWING SPECIFICS, THERE'S NOT A LOT I CAN SAY ABOUT ALL THAT...

BUT IF SOMETHING IS *GENUINELY NECESSARY*, ISN'T IT GOOD TO--



**SLAM**

**NO.**

THAT IS A TRAP.



THE QUICKEST PATH TO TRUE EVIL IS TO FORGET WHAT EVIL IS.



IN ALL OF OUR LIVES, THERE WILL BE MOMENTS WHEN THERE ARE ONLY BAD OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM.

THE EASIEST PATH IS TO MAKE EXCUSES. TO SAY THE *LEAST EVIL* OPTION IS *GOOD*.

THE MORE YOU SAY IT, THE MORE YOU *BELIEVE* IT, AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT...



YOU DON'T SEE IT AS EVIL ANYMORE.

YOU STOP LOOKING FOR OTHER OPTIONS.



I MAY BE A MONSTER, BUT I KEEP LOOKING FOR THE OTHER OPTION.

YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE OTHERWISE.



YOU, TEDD, ARE THE OTHER OPTION.

YOU HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE MONSTERS LIKE ME UNNECESSARY.